

# A Brief History of Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness

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## PART 1

*“There is a revolution coming.  
It will not be like revolutions in the past.  
It will originate with the individual  
and the culture, and it will change the  
political structure as its final act.  
It will not require violence to succeed,  
and it cannot be successfully resisted by  
violence. This is the revolution of the  
New Generation.” – Charles Reich,  
The Greening of America (1970)*



### Introduction

In his book on the American Civil Liberties Union, Alan Sears of the Alliance Defense Fund writes that one of the great myths of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that the ACLU started out as a good, patriotic, pro-liberty organization that somehow strayed off-course. The truth, however, is that when we look at its history, the evidence shows something quite different. From the beginning, the ACLU had a definite agenda: to undermine the foundations of traditional American culture through the manipulation and exploitation of our legal system.

Likewise, a similar case can be made regarding the origins and the agenda of Political Correctness. For many Americans, Political Correctness is a merely a vague term used to characterize a variety of random ideas and causes with no particular unifying features other than the fact that they are “liberal” and “new.” Or as Dinesh D’Souza has noted, PC ideas and causes often seem “scattered” and “unconnected.” Otherwise, the assumption is that these ideas and causes are well-intentioned if sometimes a bit extreme, hyper-sensitive or even silly. But a closer look at the history of Political Correctness reveals something quite different. Although sometimes referred to as “cultural liberalism,” it is more accurately an expression of “cultural Marxism.”

Far from being just a random collection of

idealistic notions, Political Correctness is nothing less than an orchestrated attack on Western civilization. Its primary targets include (1) the Christian faith and moral values, which cultural liberals believe perpetuate repression, intolerance and arrogant exclusivity; and (2) non-liberal white people – particularly white males – whom they believe to be the source of most of the world’s exploitation and violence.

For critics of Political Correctness, it is a pejorative term used to describe ideas, words, policies and behavior that are considered offensive and inappropriate by the liberal cultural elites who dominate the education institutions, the media establishments, and much of popular culture in contemporary American life. For PC advocates, labeling certain thoughts, speech and actions

“politically incorrect” is an effective way to censor dissenting views or prohibit anything that they consider...

- Out-dated or too traditional;
- Insensitive or discriminatory toward certain minorities the requires special protection – usually defined as blacks, Hispanics, feminist women, homosexuals, and non-Christians (hence, the emphasis on left-wing indoctrination programs such as “diversity training workshops”); or
- “Unprogressive” (i.e., non-liberal) – either politically, socially, or religiously.

The PC obsession with group identity and its efforts to grant special protection status to certain kinds of people is the basis for the recent trend in “hate crimes” legislation whereby perpetrators are punished for their motives (i.e., their attitudes toward their victims) rather than simply for what they have done. Violating the Constitutional guarantee of equal justice under the law, “hate crimes” legislation imposes stiffer punishments for crimes committed against certain preferred social groups, which is a form of discriminatory injustice that is unprecedented in American history. Furthermore, the simple act of criticizing someone who belongs to one of these specially protected groups is sometimes deemed a “hate crime.” As William Lind has noted...

For the first time in our history, Americans have to be fearful of what they say, of what they write, and of what they think. They have to be afraid of using the wrong word, a word [considered] offensive or insensitive, or racist, sexist, or homophobic....

[Unless it is defeated, Political Correctness] will eventually destroy... everything that we have ever defined as our freedom and our culture. [William S. Lind, “The Origins of Political Correctness.” [Www.academia.org/lectures](http://www.academia.org/lectures).]

## The Evolution of a Term

The term “politically correct” has been around for a while, but its meaning has changed over times. It was first used in an early Supreme Court case, *Chisholm v. State of Georgia* (1793), in which the Court declared that references to “the United States” rather than “the People of the United States” was “not politically correct.” In this sense, the Court was simply declaring that “the United States” as a legal entity was technically improper

– the inference being that the federal government was merely the agent of the states and of the American people.

In modern use, scholars trace the term to Mao Zedong’s *Little Red Book* [See Ruth Perry, “A Short History of the Term ‘Politically Correct’ in Patricia Aufderheide, *Beyond PC: Toward a Politics of Understanding* (1992).] Prior to Mao, the concept of Political Correctness was used by Bolsheviks to suppress all opposing speech and actions that strayed from the official Communist Party line. Since the Party supposedly represented “the people,” anything that dissented from Communist orthodoxy was “counter-revolutionary,” politically incorrect, and therefore intolerable.

In the 1960s the term was adopted by the radical New Left to silence its critics. According to New Left ideology, traditional conservative beliefs and practices were innately “authoritarian,” “repressive,” “unprogressive,” and therefore unworthy of toleration. In a 1970 essay, *The Black Woman*, Toni Cade Bambara declared that “a man cannot be politically correct and a [male] chauvinist too.” The concept of Political Correctness was also used to shield certain minority groups from unfair stereotyping or insensitive labeling. For example, in the 1960s the traditional terms “colored people” and “Negroes” were phased out in favor of “blacks” and then “Afro-Americans,” which later was amended to “African-Americans” or even “people of color.”

In the 1990s, due to its association with radical left-wing ideas, the term “political correctness” was used pejoratively by conservatives and moderates in response to radical left-wing efforts to suppress free speech and conduct. In a 1991 commencement speech at the University of Michigan, President George H. W. Bush noted the growing movement on campuses to “declare certain topics... expressions... [and] even certain gestures off-limits.” Similarly, in *The Death of the West*, conservative commentator Pat Buchanan wrote that “Political Correctness is cultural Marxism, a regime to punish dissent and to stigmatize social heresy as the Inquisition punished religious heresy. Its trademark is intolerance.”

Even liberal *Newsweek* magazine, in a 1990 cover story on the new “Thought Police,” noted the Marxist roots of Political Correctness:

PC is, strictly speaking, a totalitarian philosophy....

Politically, PC is Marxist in origin....

There are... some who recognize the tyranny of PC but see it only as a transitional phase, which will no longer be necessary once the virtues of tolerance are internalized. Does that sound familiar? It's the dictatorship of the proletariat. ["Taking Offense." *Newsweek* (Dec. 24, 1990), p. 51, 53, 54]

## PC Ideology

### Ten Foundational Principles

There are ten principles that essentially define Political Correctness. [NOTE: Some of these principles are obviously contradictory, but that's not a problem for radical leftists who dismiss logic as "Western thinking."]

**1. Liberal Exclusivism.** The only social and political ideas and practices that have any legitimacy are those of modern cultural liberalism. As social theorist Theodor Adorno argued in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1948), only the true liberal is mentally healthy and socially well-adjusted. According to Adorno, conservatives and traditionalists are innately fascistic, which renders them mentally and/or morally inferior. Conservatives are not simply wrong: they are demented, perverted, and dangerous. Therefore, their ideas are not even worthy of consideration.

**2. An Evolutionary View of Society and Culture.** Along with human biological evolution, human societies and institutions are also evolving toward greater heights of awareness and understanding. What might have been "true" or "reasonable" in the past is often outdated in the present.

**3. Moral Relativism.** As an extrapolation of #2 above, there are no moral absolutes. All standards, including all laws, are conditional, situational, and subjective. [NOTE: Postmodernists would add that all laws are impositions by the powerful on the weak.]

Every person's opinions and moral values are of equal value and worth, and no one should be allowed to impose his/her own beliefs on others. However, because the beliefs and practices of social conservatives are often outdated, politically incorrect and inferior, they need to be limited to the private sphere and banned from the public square.

**4. Skepticism.** There is no objective reality. Everything is subjective and based on one's own cultural heritage, race, class, sex, sexual orientation, life experiences, and lifestyle.

**5. Five Sacred Values.** There are five values that should govern all thinking and social interaction in a free and democratic society.

- **Tolerance.** Tolerance is an absolute virtue. We should accept every person, group, and culture non-judgmentally, and no one has a right to judge any person, group, or culture as being inferior or wrong.
- **Egalitarianism.** The only legitimate form of government is democracy. There should be no restrictions on voting and office-holding based on race, sex, education, or moral factors (except perhaps in the case of certain types of felons).

Like the Communist pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, cultural liberals believe that "Everyone is equal – but some people are more equal than others." Those who are "more equal" are the liberal cultural elites and those who follow them.

- **Multi-culturalism.** All societies and cultures are morally equivalent and equally legitimate. Likewise, all cultural heritages and traditions are morally equivalent. Therefore, Christianity and Western culture are no better than any other religion or cultural heritage, and to think otherwise is to be ethnocentric and judgmental.

"Multi-culturalism" is the basis for the PC veneration of "diversity," which cultural liberals believe is innately good.

[NOTE: It is important to distinguish between the *sociology* of multi-culturalism and the *ideology* of multi-culturalism. Multi-cultural sociology is simply a description and an analysis of various cultures, their distinctive traits, unique histories and traditions, etc. This is useful (or even necessary) information given the realities of our pluralistic contemporary global society, and it is relatively non-controversial.

The ideology of multi-culturalism, however, is something altogether different. Derived from a secular humanistic worldview and based on relativistic presuppositions, it blurs the qualitative distinctions between various cultures just as religious pluralism seeks to render all religions essentially the same. But the

reality is that cultures – like religions, political systems and individual human beings – are all different, and some are obviously better than others. The ideology of multi-culturalism, however, promotes a left-wing socio/political agenda that denigrates the uniqueness of Western civilization and the Judeo-Christian heritage in order to pave the way for a radically new kind of society and culture based on secular humanistic values.]

- **Inclusion.** No individual or group has a right to discriminate against anyone else for any reason. However, in order to rectify past injustices, cultural liberals sometimes find it expedient to curtail the civil liberties of traditionalists and cultural conservatives – such as in the case of “hate speech,” for example.
- **Religious pluralism.** All religions are manmade, and to the extent that there is any truth or value in any them, all religions are (more or less) equally valid (or invalid).

**6. Education and Social Transformation.** The primary purpose of education is not to accumulate knowledge and acquire skills but to become a useful and productive citizen.

The key to social and political transformation is through Politically Correct education, a form of indoctrination that frees people from traditional prejudices so as to create a new kind of society. If properly educated [actually, indoctrinated], citizens today can be more enlightened and socially-conscious than people in the past.

**7. The Educated Liberal Elite.** Those who have been properly educated in the values of cultural liberalism are the intellectual elite and the natural leaders in society. This is the elite class that dominates politics, the legal system, education, the media, social services, the entertainment industry, and religious higher education. Although committed to tolerance and egalitarian democracy, the liberal elite have the right and the responsibility to lead others into correct paths of thinking and living.

**8. Social Consciousness.** Individualism is bad, and people should think and act in the interests of the commonweal (the common good of society). However, no one should impose his/her moral values on others – except for the liberal elite class which has the responsibility to

protect the victims of social injustice from those who would exploit them.

#### **9. The Sociological Orientation.**

Individualism is a threat to social harmony. Politics is about group identity, and people are defined primarily by their race, ethnicity, class, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

**10. (All cultures may be equally valid, but...) Western civilization sucks.** Throughout history, Western civilization and culture have been marked by racism, sexism, homophobia, conquest, violence, cultural imperialism, oppression, exploitation, religious bigotry, etc. Capitalism, which is based on greed and exploitation, is unjust and unfair. Traditional Christianity has been exclusive, intolerant, repressive and oppressive.

### **A Marxist Dialectic**

Contemporary Political Correctness is a form of cultural Marxism that is derivative of a naturalistic (atheistic) worldview and a Secular Humanistic philosophy. As discussed below, Political Correctness follows the Marxist dialectic in terms of its views on history, society, authoritarianism, expropriation and the redistribution of wealth, tolerance, and sexual politics.

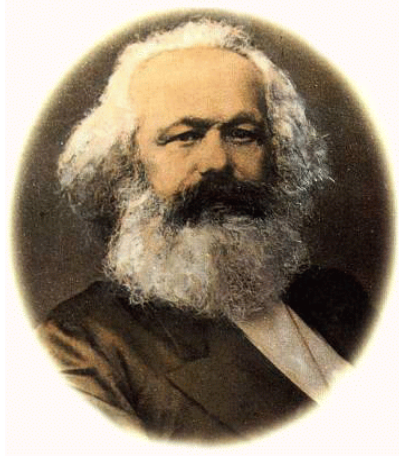
**Secular Humanism.** As an atheist with a naturalistic worldview, Karl Marx was contemptuous of religion in general and Christianity in particular. In this regard he was influenced particularly by the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72), who in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) put forth the theory that religion is a purely human invention and a generally negative influence because it distracts man from what is real by focusing his attention on an imaginary afterlife. In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx echoed these sentiments with comments such as “Religion is the opiate of the people” and “Man is the supreme being for man.”

As a militant atheist, Marx failed to appreciate that religion (or more correctly, the yearning for transcendence) is a basic human need. Intrinsically, we want to know where we came from, why we’re here, and what becomes of us when we die – questions for which naturalism has no answers. Furthermore, religion provides a basis for morality and social concern by challenging us to go above and beyond our own personal interests.



This is why, in general, people of faith are the most charitable and benevolent people in the world. In addition, numerous studies confirm that religious people are generally more happy, well-adjusted, and emotionally stable than non-believers.

Marx's utopian Communistic society was in some respects a secularized version of the Kingdom of God – a harmonious and cooperative community but without God. Blinded by his prejudices, Marx



omitted the one factor and the one power that could actually transcend human selfishness, egoism and conflict, which is why Communistic societies have been among the most tyrannical and brutal in all of human history.

Marx held a cynical and unbalanced view of Christianity and Christian history that distorted reality. While he was correct in observing that religion (including nominal Christianity) has often been used by the rich and the powerful to serve their own interests and preserve the status quo, he failed to appreciate that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of liberation. When clearly and honestly proclaimed, it actually confronts and condemns the forces of exploitation and oppression that have plagued all societies and cultures throughout time.

Secular Humanism as a man-centered philosophy that derives from a naturalistic worldview. Historically, it dates back to classical Greece – in particular, to the Sophist philosophers who replaced the traditional pantheistic/pagan worldview with an anti-religious one. Sophism was best summarized by Protagoras in his famous dictum, “Man is the measure of all things” (in contrast to the gods being the measure of all things).

One of the first references to the term “humanism” was in Renaissance era, and as originally used it had no anti-religious intentions. Essentially, Renaissance humanism honored the dignity and the sacredness of human life, although

it did tend to shift the focus of life somewhat from a God-centered perspective to one that celebrated human creativity, human needs, and human self-fulfillment. But for the next several centuries it was a generally innocuous term, and many of the great scholars and intellectuals of the late-medieval and early-modern eras described themselves as Christian humanists.

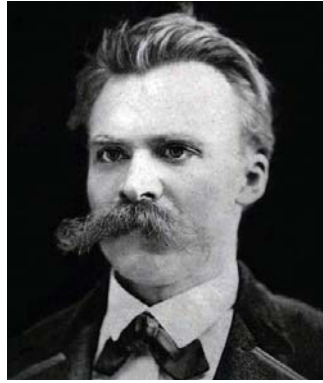
During the period of the Enlightenment, however, the concept of humanism took a decidedly secular turn. Enlightenment *philosophes* tended to look to pre-Christian classical culture for intellectual inspiration and their model of the ideal society, and for many of these thinkers Christianity represented institutionalized religious repression, theological dogmatism, and antiquated superstition. Unfortunately, traditional status quo Christianity was not up to the intellectual challenges of the day, and as Os Guinness has noted in *The Dust of Death*, “As the 18<sup>th</sup> century came to a close, all the wisdom and all the wit apparently lay on the side of the Enlightenment.”

A half-century later, in the mid-1800s, science also appeared to turn against traditional Biblical faith. The old geocentric theory of the universe had already been refuted for nearly 300 years in the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and others, and now, with Darwin, biology also appeared to turn against the belief that humanity is a special creation of God. Instead, “evolution” – i.e., “nature” – was thought to replace God as the explanatory cause of all that exists. Furthermore, it didn’t help that the new social sciences of historical and textual criticism appeared to cast serious doubts on the divine inspiration of the Bible. As a result, many Christians, not wanting to be left behind, abandoned traditional Biblical beliefs for modern theories and philosophies more compatible with “science” and modern thought.

Since the dawn of Christianity, but especially in modern times under the influence of Feuerbach, Darwin, Marx and Freud, there has always been within naturalism a special hostility toward the Christian faith. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this antipathy was most explicitly expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche in works such as *The Anti-Christ*, in which he railed:

I condemn Christianity: I bring against the Christian Church the most terrible of all the accusations that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. It is, to me, the greatest of all imaginable corruptions; it seeks to work

the ultimate corruption, the worst possible corruption. The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul.



Friedrich Nietzsche

With the coming of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the secularistic forces and influences that had been at work in American society since the time of the Enlightenment coalesced to spawn new movements and organizations. Not coincidentally, Secular Humanism as a defined philosophy emerged in full force just after World War I, just as the Neo-Marxist scholars of the Frankfurt School in Germany were working out their theories and setting their agenda. [NOTE: See the following section on the historical origins of Neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School.]

From an organizational standpoint, several notable events occurred in America in the 1920s and '30s that advanced a Secular Humanistic agenda. In 1920 a coalition of liberal lawyers founded the American Civil Liberties Union, and the ACLU has functioned ever since as a powerful legal arm for liberal activism. It has also been in the forefront of the contemporary culture war, waging aggressive campaigns against Christianity in American public life.

In 1929 Charles Potter, a former Baptist preacher turned Unitarian, founded the First Humanist Society of New York, and the following year he wrote an influential book entitled *Humanism: A New Religion*. Three years later a group of 34 lawyers, scholars, educators, and other professionals organized the American Humanist Association and drafted *The Humanist Manifesto*. Based on Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, *The Humanist Manifesto* provided a philosophical platform for the humanist movement and put forth a radical secular vision for America. Also noteworthy was the formation in 1961 of the Unitarian/Universalist Church, a merger of the two most prominent groups associated with religious humanism in America.

Over the past 40 years the Secular Humanist alliance has been in the forefront of America's culture war, aggressively and relentlessly promoting various left-wing causes from abortion-on-demand to amnesty for illegal aliens. They have steadily gained momentum over time, and since the 1980s their agenda has been advanced through several well-financed and influential organizations including...

- The American Freethought Society, along with its publishing arm, Prometheus Books;
- People for the American Way, founded by the TV producer, Norman Lear;
- Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, a high-profile advocacy group led by Barry Lynn; and
- A variety of Political Action Committees (PACs) such as MoveOn.Org, which is financed by the billionaire George Soros. (Soros is as strident as he is rich. In 2002 he was quoted as saying, "The separation of church and state, the bedrock of our democracy, is clearly undermined by having a born-again President [i.e., George W. Bush]." Soros would apparently prefer to have someone who is fair and objective on matters related to church and state, such as an atheist like himself.)

Likewise, two influential publications should be mentioned in passing that have contributed significantly to promoting Secular Humanism in American public life: *Playboy*, founded in 1950, and *The Skeptic*, founded in 1992.

[NOTE: As Charles Potter and many others have recognized, Secular Humanism is not a neutral philosophy but a godless religion. In 1961, in the case of *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the U. S. Supreme Court acknowledged this reality when it declared: "Among religions in this country which do not teach... a belief in the existence of God, are Buddhism, Taoism... Secular Humanism and others."]

**Theory of History.** Classical Marxism was based on the theory of economic determinism, class warfare, and the struggle for control of the means of production. In the opening lines of the *Communist Manifesto* Marx wrote, "The history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggles." According to him, societies progressed through various set stages of development until they reached the level of capitalism. Inevitably, the exploited working classes would rise up,

overthrow their capitalistic oppressors, and establish a pure communistic (classless) society based on the egalitarian principle, "From each according to his ability to each according to his need."

However, the transition from competitive capitalism to cooperative communism wouldn't occur overnight, as human beings have been conditioned historically to think and act individualistically rather than cooperatively. The evolution toward a pure classless society must be guided by a "dictatorship of the proletariat," an elite class of enlightened intellectuals (such as Marx, for instance) who would socially engineer the process.

Anticipating postmodernism, Politically Correct Neo-Marxism is predicated on the belief that all history is driven by power relationships. Certain groups – defined by race, religion, sex and class – dominate others that are the victims of oppression and injustice. In order to create an equal and just society, the liberal elite class – in particular, politicians, judges, educators, entertainers, and the media – must mold public opinion and promote legislation and values that moves society toward the liberal utopian ideal.

**Social Theory.** Sociologically-based stereotyping, social polarization and class conflict (and even class warfare) are integral aspects of classical Marxist social theory. Classical Marxism divided society into "good" and "bad" people along broad socio/economic lines. The "good" were the "productive" classes – i.e., the proletariat class of common laborers, factory workers, artisans, farmers and peasants who worked with their hands. The "bad" were the predatory exploiters – the bourgeoisie class, the capitalists, industrialists, bankers, managers, landlords, clergy, etc.

In contemporary Neo-Marxist thought, this kind of simplistic social stereotyping is perpetuated, except that now the "good" are the victimized minorities – feminist women, blacks, Hispanics, homosexuals, etc. – and the "bad" are white males, non-feminist white females and Christians.

The division of humanity along broad sociological lines rather than according to individual character has been a recurring theme since ancient times, but it usually has been cast in economic terms. Racial and sexual politics is a uniquely 20<sup>th</sup> century concept. But long before Marx, notable Americans commented on the age-

old problem of class envy and class conflict:

- John Adams: "In every society where property exists there will ever be a struggle between rich and poor."
- James Madison, writing in *The Federalist*: "The most common... source of [conflict] has been the various and unequal distribution of property."
- Abraham Lincoln, writing in 1837: "These capitalists generally act harmoniously, and in concert, to fleece the people."

Of course, the massive social and economic upheavals brought on by the emergence of modern capitalism and Industrial Revolution only exacerbated classist biases and tensions, as Marx correctly noted in the *Communist Manifesto*:

Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

A decade before Marx, the platform of the Working Men's Republican Political Association of Penn Township, Pennsylvania stated the same theme:

There appear to exist two distinct classes, the rich and the poor; the oppressed and the oppressor; those that live by their own labor and they that live by the labor of others; the aristocratic and the democratic; the despotic and the republican, who are in direct opposition to one another in their objects and pursuits.

Likewise, consider the Populist Manifesto of 1892:

On the one side are the allied hosts of the monopolies, the money power, great trusts and railroad corporations, who seek the enactment of laws to benefit them and impoverish the people; on the other are the farmers, laborers, merchants, and all other people who produce wealth and bear the burdens of taxation....

Throughout his extended political career, William Jennings Bryan often echoed these same sentiments:

On the one side stand the corporate interests of the U.S., the moneyed interests, aggregated wealth and capital, imperious, arrogant, compassionless....

Like Bryan, Mary Lease was another Populist firebrand orator in the 1890s:

Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street and for Wall Street.



The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a time of great reform movements as both the Populists and the Progressives challenged the traditional socio/economic status quo. Although their emphases were different, the Populist/Progressive coalition pushed a broad-based agenda calling for cleaner government and less political corruption; female suffrage and a more democratic political system; governmental regulation of trusts and corporations; a healthier and safer work environment; better pay and shorter hours for workers; consumer protection legislation; disability insurance and pension plans for workers; women and child labor laws; and laws to limit the workday to 10 hours. As one reformer put it, “The real heart of the movement is to use the government as an agency of human welfare.”

Many of the most outstanding Americans of the era were caught up in the great humanitarian and reform causes of the day, and bourgeois progressives such as Helen Keller often sounded as radical as the socialists:

This country is governed for the richest, for the corporations, the bankers, the land speculators, and for the exploiters of labor.... There is a natural competition and conflict between these competing groups that can only be resolved by a survival of the fittest.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the main difference between middle-class reformers such as Jane Addams or Helen Keller and socialists such as Eugene Debs was a matter of degree, not kind. But although their rhetoric often sounded alike, there was at least one fundamental philosophical difference between them. Many Progressive humanitarians believed capitalism could be reformed and made humane under proper government regulation, unionization, and new technological innovations. Furthermore, they did not believe, as did the socialists and Marxists, that there is an inevitable and unreconcilable conflict of interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat classes. In time, of course, this proved to be generally true as decade-by-decade the working conditions, incomes, and standard-of-living for the working classes gradually improved.

Social and economic progress is not a zero-sum game in which someone must lose whenever someone else wins. In an equal opportunity society in which all race- and gender-based legal restrictions have been eliminated, it is possible (so far as any manmade system allows) to have a truly trans-racial and trans-gender society wherein people succeed or fail according to the quality of

their character. This should be the ideal, but it would hinder the goals of the cultural Marxists who want to radically change American society and culture through persistent agitation. A key tactic in their assault on traditional American values and institutions is the perpetuation of racial and sexual politics.

**Authoritarianism.** Theoretically, the ultimate goal of Marxism has always been a classless (or communistic) society in which everyone is equal. Since this goal defies the realities of human nature, it takes a special class of people in society with the power to impose egalitarianism on everyone else. In Marx’s writings, he called this interim phase between the fall of capitalism and the dawn of communism the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Naturally, he inferred that this was a benevolent dictatorship (at least, benevolent after all the “counter-revolutionaries” in society had been liquidated), but for the hundreds of millions who have had to endure Communist Dictatorships of the Proletariat in places like the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, Cuba, North Korea and elsewhere, it has been anything but benevolent.

Like their patriarch Marx, Neo-Marxists are convinced that those who oppose their agenda are witless traditionalists with no social consciousness and no regard for social justice. Therefore, the cultural elite class has a moral responsibility to protect the victims of social injustice – the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, feminists, homosexuals, radical left-wing political ideologues, *et al.* – from the bigotry and exploitation of troglodyte conservatives.

Furthermore, because their cause is so righteous, the cultural elite is justified in using any means necessary to suppress dissent and control society and culture for the common good of “the people.” Therefore, a certain amount of censorship is necessary in order to suppress “politically incorrect” opinions in the interest of a more fair, just and harmonious society – as defined by the cultural elite, of course.

**Theory of Expropriation and the Redistribution of Wealth.** Classical Marxism taught that following the revolution, the proletariat had the right to expropriate the land, factories, and other property of the bourgeoisie. Of course, in the initial stages all land had to be expropriated by the state and “the People’s Party” (i.e., the Communist Party) until the Dictatorship of the Proletariat had prepared the masses to



transition into a pure communist society. But at least theoretically, an essential component of the theory of expropriation was the redistribution of wealth and power in order to punish the rich for their sins and reward the victims of social injustice. To rally support among the working classes for a Communist revolution, Marx called for “a heavy progressive or graduated income tax” along with the “abolition of all rights of inheritance,” but ultimately his aim was to confiscate the wealth of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie and redistribute it to the common folks, as he wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The distinguishing feature of Communism is... the abolition of bourgeois property.... Modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

The expropriation and redistribution of wealth is perennially popular since it exploits the class envy that is present in virtually all societies throughout history. Among the poor and the working classes, there has always been the tendency to view the rich and the powerful with fear and loathing. In some societies, of course, the class antagonism is considerably more justified, but even in the most free and open societies it will always be a source of contention. Consider the following comments by the Populist organizer Ignatius Donnelly in 1894:

This government was founded by plain men, not millionaires. But we now have two parties arrayed against each other, Aristocracy against Commonality. Thirty thousand families own one half of the wealth of this country, and they have no part in producing it. They have stolen it from the labor and toil that has produced the nation.

Similarly, the American socialist Eugene Debs was passionate in decrying the vast disparity between the incomes and lifestyles of the rich and poor:

I am opposing a social order in which it is possible for one man who does absolutely nothing that is useful to amass a fortune of millions of dollars – while million of men and women who work all the days of their lives secure barely enough for a wretched existence.

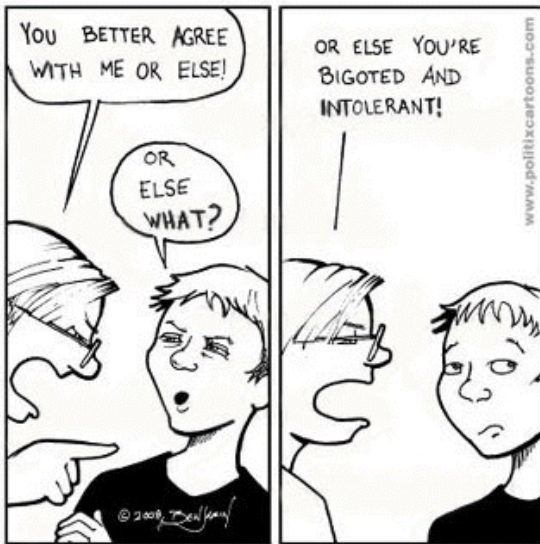
Furthermore, it wasn’t just radical reformers and socialists who expressed outrage over the disparity between the privileged elite and the common working classes. In 1886 the writer and social commentator, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) wrote...

Who are the oppressors? The few: the king, the capitalist and a handful of other overseers and superintendents. Who are the oppressed? The many: the nations of the earth; the valuable persons; the workers; they that make the bread that the soft-handed and idle eat. Why is it right that there is not a fairer division of the [resources] all around? Because laws and constitutions have ordered otherwise. Then it follows that laws and constitutions should change and say there shall be a more nearly equal division.

In our day, the enforcers of Political Correctness have taken the classical Marxist theme of expropriation and redistribution of wealth and turned it into a racial (and sometimes gender-based) spoils system in education, government and major corporations. Once PC zealots are entrenched in a university, a government bureaucracy or a corporation, they often implement an expropriation program under the guise of “diversity” and enforce it through Affirmative Action quotas. When initiated in the 1970s, the concept of Affirmative Action was promoted as a way to compensate for past injustices. In some cases there was some merit in this attempt to “level the playing field,” but as time goes on such programs merely perpetuate a racial (or gender-based) spoils systems. Rather than individual merit and competence being the decisive factors in admissions, hiring and promotions, race, ethnicity or gender (or in some cases, sexual preference) now becomes the primary criterion.

**Selective Tolerance.** In classical Marxism, the bourgeoisie were castigated as “counter-revolutionaries” and “enemies of the people.” As vile exploiters, they were entitled to no rights. Today, PC Marxists promote racial- and gender-based cultural diversity as a method by which they can break the social and economic domination of white males.

As mentioned previously, the left poses as the champions of tolerance, but in reality they are only selectively tolerant when it comes to real diversity. They have no interest in ideological diversity if it includes Christians, social conservatives or moral traditionalists.



They justify their bigotry and intolerance the same way Marxists have always done. Just as Communist parties, posing as the official voice of “the people,” outlawed all opposition (“counter-revolutionary”) parties, cultural Marxists believe they have a responsibility to eradicate the last vestiges of Christian influence and white male dominance in America’s cultural institutions.

This explains why so many traditionally conservative institutions eventually become liberal over time. Most reasonable conservatives understand that, due to the fallibility of mankind, traditional values and practices are imperfect, so they tend to tolerate people whose views are more liberal or relativistic. Similarly, in their skepticism toward traditional values, liberals tend to tolerate those who are more radical than themselves. Hard-core radicals, however, are left-wing fundamentalist ideologues. Unlike moderates and most conservatives, they understand the principle of culture war. They realize that what is at stake is a struggle between two incompatible and irreconcilable worldviews. This is why they are resolute and implacably hostile toward anyone more traditional or conservative than themselves.

**Sexual Politics.** In modern times, one of the strongest appeals of radical left-wing ideology has been its promotion of sexual liberation. This was an underlying theme in the French Revolution, and it was featured prominently in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Both of them advocated the abolition of the traditional family, and in Marx’s *The German Ideology* (1845) and Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) they argued that traditional male patriarchy oppressed females by holding

them as property of their fathers and husbands. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx also called for the abolition of marriage and the open “community of women” (i.e., free sex).

As stated previously, Political Correctness is essentially cultural Marxism, and as an ideology it derives from a naturalistic worldview and a secular humanistic philosophy. As Dinesh D’Souza notes in his book, *What’s So Great About Christianity* (2007), one of the greatest attractions of naturalism is its sexual implications. Secularists and left-wing ideologues in particular have always known this, and D’Souza quotes one as saying, “Against the power of religion we employ an equal if not greater power – the power of the hormones.”

Ever since the 1920s Neo-Marxists have emphasized the ‘X’ factor as part of their strategy for cultural subversion. Like other social radicals before them, they argue that traditional and conventional sexuality is repressive, and that there should be no limits on sexual experimentation and expression. A key component of cultural Marxism – and a clever strategy on their part – has been the integration of Marxism and Freudianism. Like the Freudians, they believe traditional Biblically-based sexual morality is a repressive force that hinders societal evolution.

Freudian psychology, the Sexual Revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and *Playboy*-style hedonism are rooted in a naturalistic worldview that considers men and women to be highly-evolved animals. This makes any appeal to “morality” problematical, as “morality” becomes whatever the individual feels is “natural” or society deems acceptable. In the past, most societies repressed sexual libertinism because it was considered irresponsible and resulted in negative social consequences. But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century sex propagandists have argued that repression of the sexual libido is psychologically unhealthy and therefore worse than sexual libertinism. For human beings prone to egoism and driven by base impulses, this is a nearly irresistible temptation, and it has been exploited magnificently by cultural radicals who use sexual politics to undermine the moral integrity of our society and advance their ultimate agenda.

### Post-Script: Truth and Consequences

Regarding the ideology of Political Correctness, it is helpful to keep two points in mind:

(1) The PC mentality tends to assign value to people according to their identification with broad sociological categories as defined by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; and

(2) PC controversies often revolve around the suppression of truth. For left-wing ideologues, certain truths must be censored and suppressed because they are “insensitive” and hurt people’s feelings. According to this mentality, certain protected groups – for instance, racial minorities, homosexuals, non-Christians, and feminist women – must be accorded special exemption status from any criticism.

Now in the first place, lumping these groups together is illogical, unwarranted, and even insulting. Blacks are a race, feminism is an ideology, and homosexuality is a moral issue or perhaps a lifestyle. It is illogical and unwarranted to criticize people because of their race or gender for the simple reason that race and gender have nothing to do with their beliefs, values, character or lifestyle. On the other hand, feminism is an ideology, and it is fair game for criticism, as is homosexuality, atheism, liberalism, conservatism, or any number of other belief-based ideologies.

But under the type of speech codes that PC advocates seek to impose, any criticisms of any of these special status groups is potentially a form of “hate speech.” Even worse is the tendency to apply this kind of fascist censorship on the individual level. Not only are certain *groups* out of bounds for criticism, but even *individuals* within these groups are untouchable. Conversely, of course, there is a deplorably hypocritical double standard at work as “hate speech” codes ignore criticisms and attacks on white people in general and white men in particular, heterosexuals, and Christians.

Political Correctness is tyrannical, hypocritical, self-righteous, hyper-sensitive and humorless. Furthermore, it is anti-individual and irrational. According to the PC rules of engagement, it is insufficient to value human beings according to the content of their character; people must be accepted (or rejected) on the basis of what sociological category they fit into.

### Cultural Marxism: The Historical Origins The Greatest Threat

In the late 1980s many culture watchers were alarmed by the emergence of “Political Correctness” in higher education – a form of left-wing cultural imperialism that was adamantly doctrinaire and implacably intolerant of all opposing views. The irony was that the same radical left-wing ideologues who sparked the Free-Speech Movement in Berkeley in 1964 and rebelled against “conformity” in American society and the lack of intellectual diversity in higher education were now trying to restrict free speech and control the behavior of a new generation of students.

The irony is striking, to say the least. Consider the following excerpt from a famous speech by Mario Savio, a UC-Berkeley student activist who was rallying his fellow students to enter Sproul Hall and begin their sit-in demonstration:

We have an autocracy which runs this university. It’s managed [like a corporation]. Now, I ask you to consider: If this is [an industry], and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, if President [Clark] Kerr is the manager, then I’ll tell you something: the faculty are a bunch of employees, and we’re the raw material! But we’re a bunch of raw material[s] that don’t mean to have any process upon us, don’t mean to be made into any product, don’t mean to end up being bought by some clients of the University, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone! We’re human beings!

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can’t take part; you can’t even passively take part, and you’ve got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you’ve got to make it stop. And you’ve got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you’re free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

Now, no more talking. We’re going to march in singing, “We Shall Overcome.” Slowly, there are a lot of us. Up here to the left... I didn’t mean that as a pun....

Many of the radicals of the 1960s are no less radical today, except that now they held key positions in the higher education establishment as administrators, deans and professors. Many of them are surprisingly candid and about their



agenda, such as Henry Louis Gates, a literature professor at Duke (later, Harvard), who commented in 1991:

Ours was the generation that took over buildings in the late sixties and demanded the creation of black- and women's-studies programs, and now, like the return of the repressed, we have come back to challenge the traditional curriculum. [Quoted in D'Souza, "Illiberal Education. *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 1991), p. 56.]

Expanding on this theme, Gates identified "a rainbow coalition of blacks, leftists, feminists, deconstructionists, and Marxists" who have infiltrated academia and are now "ready to take control." It will not take long, he predicted. "As the old guard retires, we will be in charge. Then, of course, the universities will become more liberal politically." [Ibid., p. 71.]

Here is a similar testimony from Jay Purini, a professor of English at Middlebury College:

After the Vietnam War, a lot of us didn't just crawl back into our library cubicles; we stepped into academic positions. With the war over, our visibility was lost, and it seemed for a while – to the unobservant – that we had disappeared. Now we have tenure, and the hard work of reshaping the universities has begun in earnest. [Ibid., p. 57.]

Academics such as Annette Kolodny, a former Berkeley radical and now the dean of the humanities faculty at the University of Arizona, are often quite open regarding their political agenda. According to Kolodny, "I see my scholarship as an extension of my political activism." Typical of this mentality is Frederick Jameson of Duke, who describes his academic mission as the creation of "a Marxist culture in this country, to make Marxism an unavoidable presence in American social, cultural and intellectual life, in short to form a Marxist intelligentsia for the struggles of the future." The deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller is even more expansive, claiming that his goal is nothing less than "demolishing beyond hope of repair the machine of Western metaphysics."

Thomas Sowell, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, is convinced that the greatest threat to Western civilization comes not from Communist China or Islamic Jihadism or any other external threat, but from within – specifically, in the elite media and within our own universities. In the following comments, Sowell asks, "Can Western civilization survive its own intellectuals?"

Western civilization has survived the invasions of Genghis Khan from the East, the Ottoman Empire from the South, and two world wars originating from within. But whether it will survive its own intellectuals is much more doubtful.

The battlefield is everywhere, but especially where the young are being taught – from the elementary school to the university. The sins of the human race are being taught to them as the special depravities of the United States or of Western civilization.

Deep thinkers like to talk about such things as the oppression of women in Western society – when in fact women have had a much lower position in Islamic cultures... and girl babies were often routinely killed in parts of Asia. It was a Western nation – Britain – which put an end to the burning of widows alive on their husbands' funeral pyres in India.

Slavery is of course the trump card of critics of Western civilization. But the tragic fact is that this abomination has existed on every continent in inhabited by man. The pyramids were built by slaves.... [and] Slavery existed in both North and South America before the first white man set foot in the Western Hemisphere....

It was precisely in the West – notably in England – that a moral revulsion against slavery and a movement to stamp it out everywhere developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Gross double standards in judging Western and non-Western cultures have become so commonplace among intellectuals that few seem to notice it anymore....

Those who habitually use such double standards... are some of the most fortunate and pampered people in Western society, including both highly paid media intellectuals and academics with soft schedules and numerous perks. Why these should be among the most venomous critics of the West – and the most blindly one-sided – is no doubt a long and complex story. However, spoiled brats have seldom been noted for their gratitude. ["Will Western Civilization Survive Intellectuals' Attack?" *Marietta Daily Journal* (Oct. 4, 1987), p. 2D.]

## Marxism and the Great War

Karl Marx predicted that when the next great European war erupted, the working classes throughout Europe would rise up and revolt against their capitalist oppressors and the bourgeois politicians who controlled these governments. According to Marx, a general European war was inevitable because capitalist nations are constantly competing for control of vital raw materials and natural resources that feed their industrial factories. He assumed that when war came, the class consciousness of the workers in the various countries would overcome any patriotic sentiments they felt, and that poor, oppressed factory workers in Britain and France would feel a greater sense of solidarity with workers in Germany than with their own upper classes.

The long-anticipated Great War finally broke out in 1914, but to the dismay of Europe's socialists, the masses of workers joined up and fought for their country just as they'd always done in the past. But Marx was right about one thing: just as he had predicted, the war was an unmitigated disaster for European civilization as it destroyed the fragile political, social, and economic stability of the continent.

## Aborted Revolutions in Germany

In the wake of World War I, two independent Communist uprisings in Germany threatened to topple the newly-established Weimar Republic.

In Berlin, the Spartacist Uprising erupted in January 1919, less than three months after the official end of the war. Although the revolt wasn't initially orchestrated by the Communist Party, it quickly became associated with the Spartacist League, a Marxist organization led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Luxemburg was a Polish-born Jew and a radical Marxist, and she was a passionate and charismatic activist and organizer. Prior to the war she was imprisoned three times for protesting German militarism and imperialism, and in the midst of the conflict she co-founded the Spartacist League along with Liebknecht. As the



Rosa Luxemburg

war dragged on, the Kaiser's government grew less tolerant of dissidents, and both Luxemburg and Liebknecht were imprisoned for the last 2½ years of the war for treasonous activities.

In January 1919 a general strike by workers flooded the streets of Berlin with protesters, and the demonstrations quickly turned into street battles between militants and the Weimar government. Once the violence erupted and blood was shed, the revolt was joined by various left-wing groups such as the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), the Spartacist League, and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

The government responded by calling in a crack militia regiment, the *Freikorps*, to quell the uprising, and over a four-day period hundreds of protesters were slaughtered. At some point in the melee, both Luxemburg and Liebknecht were arrested and summarily executed.

Meanwhile, a second revolution was taking place in Bavaria under the direction of the Marxist politician and journalist, Kurt Eisner. Like Luxemburg and Liebknecht, Eisner had been incarcerated during the war for treason. Upon his release from prison near the end of the war, he organized a revolution in Bavaria that overthrew the monarchy, and he and his supporters declared Bavaria a free state. A coalition of Communists and socialists elected Eisner the prime minister of the Bavarian Socialist Republic, but in January 1919 his party was defeated at the polls. A month later, as he was on his way to present his resignation to the Bavarian parliament, Eisner was assassinated.

With the failure of the Spartacist Uprising and the fall of the Bavarian Socialist Republic, Communism failed in its bid to seize political power in Germany. Throughout the 1920s the German Communist Party remained a potent force, but eventually its arch-rival, the National Socialists (or Nazi Party), prevailed as the incompetent and corrupt Weimar Republic finally collapsed in 1933.

## The Soviet Republic of Hungary

The most successful Communist revolution in Europe after World War I occurred in Hungary under the leadership of Bela Kun (1886-1938). Kun was born in Transylvania, which was a province in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time. (After the war, Transylvania was incorporated into the new nation of Romania.) His father was a lapsed Jew and his mother a

lapsed Protestant, and as a young man he identified with the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.

Prior to World War I Kun worked as an investigative journalist, and later fought in the Austro-Hungarian army. Captured by Russian troops in 1916, he converted to Communism in a Russian POW camp. Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that ended Russia's involvement in the war, Kun served in the Red Army during the early months of the Russian Civil War.

When World War I officially ended in November 1918, Kun returned to Hungary along with several hundred other Hungarian Communists. Immediately, he and his comrades founded the Hungarian Communist Party and launched a major propaganda campaign against the government. Like most of Europe, Hungary was economically and socially ravaged after the war. Inflation was out of control, there was massive unemployment, a lack of housing, and food and fuel shortages. Kun, a fiery and intense orator and a gifted organizer, led a series of strikes and protest demonstrations, and in February 1919 he was arrested as a Communist agitator and thrown into prison.

In the midst of all this turmoil, the Hungarian army was fighting a Romanian independence movement that was supported by the Western Allies. When the Allies threatened to intervene in Hungary on behalf of the Romanians, the Hungarian Social Democratic government, desperate for potential allies, reached out to the USSR. Since Kun was known to have Lenin's support, the Social Democrats opened negotiations with him even while he was still in prison. The SD's agreed to form a coalition with the Communists, and in a strange turn of events Kun was released from prison and promptly sworn in as the Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the new Soviet Republic of Hungary.

As the dominant official in the government, Kun moved quickly to solidify his power base. In a letter to Lenin, he boasted that "My personal influence in the Revolutionary Governing Council is such that the dictatorship of the proletariat is firmly established, since the masses are backing me." In reality, Kun was even more radical than Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and under his direction the Hungarian Soviet nationalized most private property and converted all agricultural land into collective farms rather than distribute the land to

the peasants. Then, since neither anyone in the government nor the peasants had any expertise in running large farms, they wound up retaining the former estate owners as managers. So in effect, nothing really changed for the rural masses.

The Hungarian government was more doctrinaire than competent, and in short order it drove the economy further into depression. Inflation and unemployment continued to soar while agricultural and industrial production plummeted to new levels. To control dissent, Kun organized a secret police that orchestrated a "Red Terror" campaign.

In Russia, the Bolsheviks were focused on their own internal problems, and they never intervened in Hungary's war with the Romanians. With Western backing, the Romanian military invaded Hungary in the summer of 1919, took Budapest, and forced the Hungarian government to capitulate. Kun's short-lived Communist regime had lasted only 133 days.

[Post-script: Kun's political career didn't end with the fall of the Soviet regime in Hungary. Initially, he fled to Vienna, but was incarcerated by the government for nearly a year before being released in a prisoner exchange with Russia in July 1920. With Lenin's patronage, he became an official in the Communist Party, and while serving in the Crimean he reportedly ordered a mass genocide against thousands of ethnic minorities in the area. In addition, he was responsible for the execution of tens of thousands of White Russian POWs who had been promised amnesty if they surrendered. (Source: Victor, Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*.)

As a political ally of Zinoviev, Kun became a high official in the Comintern. In 1921 he was sent to Germany as a Soviet diplomat, but he failed in his mission to spark a Communist uprising against the Weimar government. Later, he later worked as a Comintern operative in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Kun had an abrasive personality, and he constantly feuded with other Communist leaders. During Stalin's purge of the Old Bolsheviks in the late 1930s, Kun was arrested, charged with being a Trotskyite, imprisoned and executed – probably in 1938.



## Bolshevik Russia

Surprisingly, the one place where a Communist revolution actually succeeded long-term was in Russia, a nation that Marx would never have expected. Russia was an unlikely country for a Communist revolution since it was one of the most backward nations in Europe and had hardly even industrialized or transitioned to capitalism. But Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power in the October Revolution of 1917, and once in power they signed a peace treaty with Germany, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918), that took Russia out of the war. This allowed the Bolsheviks to consolidate their control over all of Russia.



Vladimir Ilich Lenin

For the next three years there was widespread chaos in the cities and countryside. Tens of thousands of armed peasants, many of whom were war veterans, roamed the countryside, seizing land and killing anyone who stood in their way. To eliminate all opposition, Lenin appointed Leon Trotsky head of the Red Army and commissioned him to break the back of any resistance movements in the country.

For more than three years the Bolsheviks fought several rebel factions. Their main opponents were various “White” armies that were loyal to the tsar and the old regime. Theoretically, the Whites should have been able to defeat the Reds, but internal rivalries within their own ranks weakened their position and they eventually were defeated. A much smaller but tenacious enemy was the Socialist Revolutionaries, a loose coalition of violent anarchists who considered the Bolsheviks too conservative. In their attempt to overthrow the government, the SR’s resorted to terrorism and assassinations, and even managed to shoot Lenin in 1918. In addition, local paramilitary outfits called the “Greens” roamed the countryside, skirmishing with both the Reds and the Whites.

The casualty rate in the Russian Civil War was catastrophic – actually higher than in World War I. Approximately one million were killed in actual battles and skirmishes, nearly three million died of famine, and another six million were

victims of a major cholera epidemic.

In the midst of the Civil War, Russia was invaded by Allied military forces in 1918. Originally, troops from the United States, Great Britain and France landed in Russia to protect Allied weapons that were being stored in Murmansk and Archangel from falling into German hands. Once in Russia, however, the Allies conspired with various White army contingents that were attempting to overthrow the Bolsheviks. In subsequent Communist propaganda, the Allied Intervention was depicted as an act of imperialist aggression and an attempt by the Western Powers to overthrow the “legitimate” government of the USSR. Obviously, the Allies had nothing but contempt for the Bolshevik regime which had unilaterally negotiated with the Germans, pulled out of the war, and broken all the treaties that the Tsar’s government had with the West. The Allies hoped to see the Bolshevik regime collapse and expected that it would be replaced a friendly government, but when the task proved too difficult, support for the Allied Intervention withered and the troops were removed. Thirty years later, Winston Churchill would remark that one of the greatest mistakes of the 20th century was “the failure to strangle Bolshevism in its cradle.”

Once the Bolsheviks had established their control over the major population centers and had either eliminated or at least neutralized their main opposition, Lenin prepared to “export the revolution” by invading Europe. In retrospect, the plan appears absurd, but in the months following the end of World War I much of Europe was in utter chaos. Lenin had always been a bold and audacious strategist, and he reckoned that Europe was ripe for conquest. The plan was to ignite a series of Communist revolutions throughout



Leon Trotsky

Eastern Europe and link up with the Communists in Germany.

As a doctrinaire Marxist, Lenin was convinced that Communism was an inevitable historical process that could not be contained within a single country such as Russia. He believed that eventually it would spread throughout the entire world, and that the survival of Communism in the USSR depended upon the overthrow of unfriendly capitalistic governments. As he put it, "As long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace. In the end one or the other will triumph." He was confident that one Western democracy after another would submit to Communism until finally the United States would drop into their hands "like an over-ripe fruit."

An integral part of the Bolsheviks' strategy was the establishment of the Third Communist International, usually referred to as the Comintern. The Comintern was founded in 1919 as an agency for the exportation of the revolution through the organization of cell groups with the target countries that would operate as a fifth column. The Comintern churned out propaganda for mass distribution along with secret internal memos instructing foreign Communist parties to take their ideology, organization and strategies from the Bolsheviks. Since the Old Europe had collapsed and a variety of left-wing groups were vying for influence and power, much of the Comintern's propaganda was aimed at rival socialist parties. So although in theory an international organization, the Comintern was in fact a propaganda organ of the Bolshevik regime. For Lenin, the first step in exporting the revolution was to conquer Poland, which had recently regained its national independence according to the terms of the treaties that ended World War I. But Poland's eastern boundaries were ill-defined, and Polish and Russian troops had been fighting in the Ukraine since before the end of the war. Lenin considered Poland to be the bridge to Central and Western Europe, and the most direct route to Berlin and Paris ran through Warsaw.

In 1919 Trotsky led the Red Army into Poland but suffered a crushing defeat at the Battle of Warsaw (or the Battle of the Vistula) in August 1920. In the succeeding months, Polish forces drove the retreating Russians farther eastward, securing Poland's independence and stabilizing its eastern borders.

## Cultural Marxism: The Early Theoreticians A New Focus

In the aftermath of World War I, the great continental-wide revolution that many Marxists expected never materialized. The working classes of Europe never united *en masse* behind the Red banner, and with the failure of Communist revolutions in Germany, the collapse of Bela Kun's regime in Hungary, and the Red Army's defeat in Poland, the Soviet Union was left isolated as the lone Communist state. Classical Marxist theory had proved insufficient in terms of rallying the masses of Europe, and in the midst of the post-war intellectual debates in Communist circles, two theorists redefined Marxism to fit the times: Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs. Rather than focus exclusively on society's economic substructure in keeping with the tenets of classical Marxism, Gramsci and Lukacs turned their attention to the superstructure – the culture. This was a much more comprehensive and ambitious undertaking, but in the long term it would prove to be a brilliant and effective strategy for undermining Western culture.

### Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian journalist, philosopher, and a political theorist. He joined the Italian Socialist Party on the eve of World War I, and during the war wrote for several socialist newspapers. After the war ended, Gramsci was instrumental in founding the Italian Communist Party.

Gramsci was among the first to recognize that a Marxist revolution was dependent upon changing the values and culture of Western civilization, which would require a long protracted culture war of attrition. Traveling to the Soviet Union in 1922 as a representative of the Italian Communist Party, he witnessed the brute force and tyranny involved in trying to convert that nation to socialism. His conclusion was that Communism was far too radical and too atheistic to be accepted voluntarily in the West. What was needed was a persistent and prolonged propaganda campaign that would undermine people's confidence in traditional values and religious beliefs, and make them more amenable to radical socialism.

Gramsci worked for the Comintern in Moscow and Vienna, where he was passionately committed to spreading Bolshevism throughout Europe. Returning to Italy, he helped create a



united front of left-wing parties that opposed Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship. From 1924-26 he represented the Communist Party in the Italian legislature, but in 1926 he was arrested in a crackdown against dissidents. In his trial, the prosecutor declared, "For 20 years we must stop this brain from functioning." Apparently, that sounded like a good idea to the judge, and Gramsci was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Eight years later he was released for health reasons, and he died a couple years after that.

While in prison Gramsci wrote *Prison Notebooks*, outlining his views on the culture war. He called his working principle and strategy Critical Theory – a systematic and broad-based assault on Western culture. Gramsci was convinced that the working classes were blind to their class interests due to 2 factors:

(1) Capitalists and social conservatives controlled the major cultural institutions, including the media and the education system. Through constant propaganda, these traditional institutions maintained social control by promoting bourgeois values and creating a consensus culture.



Antonio Gramsci

(2) Christianity was a counter-revolutionary force that continued to exert great influence over Western civilization. In the mind of Gramsci and his comrades, Christian morality and ethics represented bourgeois values and were intrinsically repressive. Christianity kept the masses docile and pacified by promising "pie in the sky" in the afterlife rather than focusing their attention on unjust social and political systems in this world.

Therefore, according to Gramsci, a priority for Marxists should be the formulation and development of a uniquely proletarian culture that would challenge the belief that bourgeois values and morality were natural and normative. Correspondingly, Marxists could change the culture in Europe over time through a process of "cultural hegemony" – i.e., by infiltrating and controlling the cultural institutions that exert the most influence over society. Whereas Marx had

written of the "commanding heights" of the economy – the key industries that essentially controlled the nation's production and distribution – Gramsci's vision was to undermine, and eventually take over, the commanding heights of the culture.

As a classical Marxist, Lenin had considered culture "ancillary" to economics and politics. Gramsci, however, knew otherwise, and argued that the best way to gain political and economic power was through a prolonged process of cultural subversion. As he wrote, "In the new order, Socialism will triumph by first capturing the culture via infiltration of schools, universities, churches and the media by transforming the consciousness of society." [NOTE: Compare this comment to the quote from Charles Reich in *The Greening of America* at the beginning of this chapter.]

Gramsci's *Prison Notebook* and other writings were among the most influential socio/political works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as any scholarly studies in social theory and popular culture would reveal.

## Georg Lukacs

Like Gramsci, the Hungarian Marxist philosopher, Georg Lukacs (1885-1971), focused on the strategic importance of culture in relation to a Marxist takeover of Western civilization. Lukacs grew up in Budapest and was the son of a wealthy Hungarian Jewish banker. A gifted scholar, he received a Ph.D. from the University of Berlin in 1906. He converted to Communism during World War I, and joined the Hungarian Communist Party in 1918.

The following year Lukacs served as People's Commissar for Education and Culture in Bela Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic, and in this position he launched a campaign of "Cultural Terrorism" – a kind of shock therapy designed to radically change the culture.

One of Kun's priorities was to introduce a comprehensive sex education indoctrination program into the schools. The curriculum promoted sexual experimentation, "free love," premarital sexual relations, and attacks on monogamous marriage and traditional Christian views on sexuality. Children were also encouraged to reject the values of their parents and the authority of the Church. Unfortunately for Lukacs and his Soviet comrades, however, the program was deemed so radical that it alienated the working classes and turned them against "the



people's" government.

When the Hungarian Soviet Republic was overthrown, Lukacs sought sanctuary in Vienna, where he socialized with Gramsci and other Marxist emigres.

For several years he worked as an agent of the Comintern, but he withdrew from active involvement in politics over tactical differences with Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks. In 1929 he moved to Berlin, but he fled to Moscow in 1933 when Hitler and the Nazis came to power.



Georg Lukacs

He remained in Moscow until the end of World War II, and somehow managed to survive Stalin's purges even though most foreign Communists such as Bela Kun were executed.

After the war Lukacs returned to Hungary and was involved in the Hungarian Communist Party. In 1956 he became a minister in the short-lived revolutionary government of Imre Nagy until it was crushed by the Soviets. Nearly executed following the collapse of the Hungarian Revolution, he publicly recanted his "revisionist" views and remained a loyal Communist until his death in 1971.

Lukacs was one of the foremost Marxist theoreticians since Karl Marx. In his book, *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), he called for the wholesale destruction of bourgeois capitalistic culture. Employing his favorite slogan, "Who will free us from the yoke of Western Civilization?" he argued adamantly that a socialist revolution could only succeed if it were preceded by a cultural revolution. He wrote, "Such a worldwide overturning of values cannot take place without the annihilation of the old values and the creation of new ones by the revolutionaries."

Lukacs was a militant atheist who understood that the single greatest obstacle to the advance of Marxism was traditional religious-based morality. As a pragmatic moral relativist who believed that the ends justify the means, he contended that morality could not be an inhibiting factor if the revolution were to succeed. To that end, all scruples must be discarded. Unlike the bourgeois

liberals, the Christian humanitarians and the moderate socialists whom he despised, Lukacs understood that the culture is just that – a *war*. There is no place for compromise, and morality has no place. It is either domination of subjugation. It is a struggle for supremacy and survival of the fittest. Inspired by the Nietzschean glorification of raw power, Lukacs called for the overthrow of Western culture by any means necessary. But first, all vestiges of Christian faith and morality had to be obliterated. In a chilling passage in *History and Class Consciousness*, he wrote:

The abandonment of the soul's uniqueness solves the problem of unleashing the diabolic forces lurking in all the violence which is needed to create revolution....

Any political movement capable of bringing Bolshevism to the West would have to be Demonic.

# A Brief History of Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness

*Jeffrey D. Breshears*

## PART 2

### The Frankfurt School

#### The Founding Agenda

In 1923 Georg Lukacs helped establish a Marxist research center at the University of Frankfurt under the sponsorship of Felix Weil. Like Marx's benefactor, Friedrich Engels, Weil was the son of a wealthy capitalist and an ardent Marxist who had earned a Ph.D. in political science from Frankfurt University. The Institute's first director, Carl Grunberg, was a professor of law and political science at the University of Vienna and an avowed Marxist. (In fact, Grunberg was the first openly-Marxist professor to hold a chair in a German university.) The original name for the center was the Institute for Marxism (*Institut für Marxismus*), but Weil and Grunberg decided for public relations purposes to give it a more generic name, The Institute of Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*). Since then, it has usually been referred to as simply "the Frankfurt School."

From the outset the founders were clear about the school's mission. Their model was the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, and according to Weil, "I wanted the institute to become known... due to its contributions to Marxism as a scientific discipline." However, there was always a contradiction between the Institute's stated philosophy and reality. Although theoretically a Marxist institution, the governing structure of the Frankfurt School was anything but classless and

egalitarian. In fact, it was even more hierarchical and less collegial than most academic institutions with a single director who was empowered with dictatorial control over the Institute's policies, programs, faculty and administration. That inconsistency aside, as Martin Jay records in his book, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research* (1973, 1996), "Carl Grunberg concluded his opening address by clearly stating his personal allegiance to Marxism as a scientific methodology, [and declared that] Marxism would be the ruling principle of the Institute."

Weil and Grunberg were orthodox Marxists, but from the beginning they encouraged a broad interdisciplinary approach to scholarship. As a result, the Institute attracted gifted scholars not only in economics but also in philosophy, history, psychology, sociology and other academic areas. Although generically Marxist, there were some philosophical variations and different emphases as various scholars applied Marxist principles to their particular field of study. As an independent



The Institute of Social Research facility in Frankfurt

Marxist think-tank, the Institute was a center for theoretical discourse but not revolutionary activism. Although some of its faculty and staff were avowed Communists, the Institute was never officially affiliated with either the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) or the more moderate Socialist Party of Germany (SPD). Furthermore, although the Frankfurt scholars praised Lenin and the Bolshevik regime in the early Twenties, support for the USSR was more tempered after Lenin died in 1924. Interestingly, Grunberg and his colleagues were careful not to criticize Stalin overtly, but they circumspectly kept their distance.

Grunberg suffered a stroke in 1927 and retired as director of the Institute of Social Research a couple of years later. In 1930 Max Horkheimer became the director of the Institute, and at that point a new philosophy took hold in the Institute. Horkheimer's view of Marxism was more expansive and dialectical rather than rigid and mechanical, and like Gramsci and Lukacs before him, he was convinced that the major impediment to the spread of Marxism was Western culture. In particular, he despised traditional Judeo/Christian ethics and morality, which he believed prevented the widespread acceptance of Marxism.

Under Horkheimer's directorship, the Frankfurt scholars synthesized Marxism, Social Darwinism and Freudian psychology, and in the process they created an ingenious cultural ideology that had the potential to radically transform German (and Western) culture. Horkheimer was convinced that human values and actions were psychological as well as ideological, and he was adamant that the Institute integrate psychology into its philosophy. The result, as Martin Jay observes, was that in the early years "the Institute concerned itself primarily with an analysis of bourgeois society's socio-economic substructure" in keeping with classical Marxism, while "in the years after 1930 its prime interest lay in its cultural superstructure" as developed by Neo-Marxist theoreticians.

Under Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School propagated a revisionistic Neo-Marxist interpretation of Western culture called Critical Theory. In essence, Critical Theory was a comprehensive and unrelenting assault on the values and institutions of Western civilization. Based on utopian social and political ideals, Critical Theory offered no realistic alternatives,

but it was nonetheless a devastating critique of the history, philosophy, politics, social and economic structures, major institutions, and religious foundations of Western civilization. As a result, despite the individual personalities and the respective differences and emphases of the various Frankfurt scholars, there was a basic philosophical coherence in their cumulative work. Ultimately, what united these scholars was the application of a Neo-Marxist dialectic in their unrelenting criticism of contemporary Western society and culture.

An important point to consider is that the driving force behind the Frankfurt School's research was never impartial scholarship but the aggressive promotion of a radical left-wing socio/political agenda. Even Martin Jay, who is generally sympathetic toward the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, concedes that "the true object of Marxism... was not the uncovering of immutable truths, but the fostering of social change." The conservative research scholar, William S. Lind, is more blunt:

The goal of Critical Theory was not truth but praxis, or revolutionary action: bringing the current society and culture down through unrelenting, destructive criticism. [William S. Lind, "Further Readings in the Frankfurt School," in *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. [www.freecongress.org](http://www.freecongress.org).]

Horkheimer and his associates did not regard truth and reason (including Marxist dogmas) as immutable and transcendent realities, but neither did they consider themselves to be relativists – either epistemically or ethically. Instead, they argued that truth exists, *but only within history*. In this sense, they regarded the dichotomy between absolutism and relativism to be false because it was merely a theoretical construct divorced from real life situations. As Martin Jay explains, "Each period of time has its own truth, Horkheimer argued.... [and] what is true is whatever fosters social change in the direction of a rational society." He goes on to note...

Dialectics was superb at attacking other systems' pretensions of truth, but when it came to articulating the ground of its own assumption and values, it fared less well.... Critical Theory had a basically insubstantial concept of reason and truth, rooted in social conditions and yet outside them... If Critical Theory can be said to have had a theory of truth, it appeared in its immanent critique of bourgeois society, which compared the pretensions of bourgeois ideology with the



reality of its social conditions. Truth was not outside the society, but contained in its own claims. Men had an emancipatory interest in actualizing the ideology. [Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 62.]

This is, to say the least, an unconvincing argument. The claim that truth is only a product of one's historical circumstance would itself be a product of one's historical circumstance, which is of course self-refuting. Although denying they were epistemic relativists, the Frankfurt scholars were certain that truth is found only within historical circumstances, yet they claimed personal exemption from the restrictions of their own historical circumstance and assumed a transcendent truth perspective. In logic, this is the "self-excepting" fallacy – but they conveniently resolved this contradiction by simply dismissing formal logic as bourgeois thinking. Besides, it imposed unwanted restrictions on their theoretical assertions.

Under Horkheimer's leadership the Frankfurt School attracted some brilliant scholars and intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno, Eric Fromm, Wilhelm Reich, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal and Herbert Marcuse. Like Trotsky, Luxemburg, Lukacs, Bela Kun and other notable European Marxists in the early 1900s, many of the Frankfurt scholars were secular Jews, a fact that the Nazis successfully exploited in their propaganda regarding a "Jewish conspiracy" of Communist intellectuals who were perverting German society.

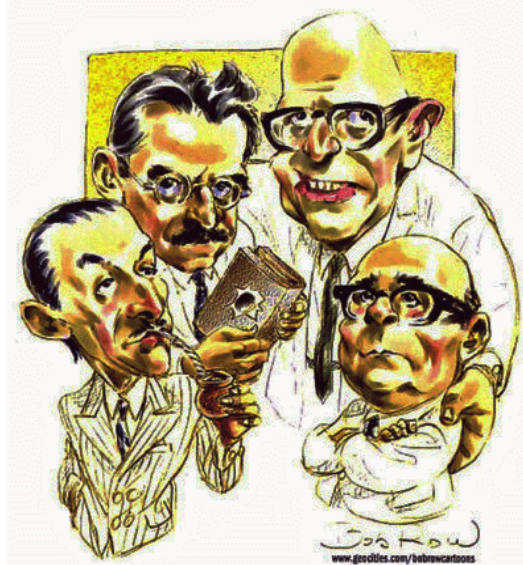
Although independent scholars in their own right, the Critical Theorists held a common commitment to Neo-Marxism and the belief that Western civilization has been an imperialistic and repressive force in human history – especially, Western Christianity. In their view, Western civilization was built on aggression, oppression, racism, slavery, classism and sexual repression. Decades later, this ideology became the philosophical basis for the founding of the various "critical studies" programs and departments in universities such as

African-American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Feminist Studies, Peace Studies, and LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bi-sexual/Transgender) Studies.

Particularly significant in this regard was Wilhelm Reich's book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), which offered up an intriguing revision of the Marxist dialectic. Unlike classical Marxism, which was fundamentally economics-based and reductionistically simplistic in terms of setting the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, Reich contended that the conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was between "reactionaries" and "revolutionaries." In other words, the culture war was not exclusively a class-based conflict but one between those who held incompatible socio/political ideologies. This allowed some among the elite classes in society, including some who were rich and highly-educated, to join in the struggle against oppression along with the poor and the exploited. Of course, it also opened up the opportunity for Marxist intellectuals such as Reich and his Frankfurt School colleagues to take leadership in the culture war on behalf of the downtrodden and the victims of Western capitalism and Christian oppression. Nonetheless, as members of the intellectual elite, they retained a certain distance from the unwashed masses. As Martin Jay notes, "the Institute's members may have been relentless in their hostility towards the capitalist system, but they never abandoned the life-style of the *haute bourgeoisie*."

In retrospect, the Frankfurt School had a significant influence on the evolution of the American left over the past 70 years, particularly the kind of cultural Marxism that generated the New Left movement in the 1960s. Since then, the

left has launched an unremitting culture war of attrition that has largely succeeded in terms of secularizing American culture and undermining traditional values and institutions, and much of its ideology, inspiration and tactics were gleaned from the Frankfurt School's Institute of Social Research.



(L-R): Felix Weil, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno

## The 'X' Factor

From the outset, the founding fathers of Communism understood that traditional family values and male/female relationships could be exploited in order to destabilize Western culture. In fact, throughout most of history, in both Western and non-Western societies, women had been oppressed and denied basic civil rights, so this was an issue that could easily be used by Critical Theorists in their critique of Western culture.

In Karl Marx's *The German Ideology* (1845) and Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), both men argued that traditional male patriarchy oppressed females by holding them as property of their fathers and husbands, and both advocated the abolition of the traditional family. But neither Marx nor Engels wanted to see women truly liberated; they simply wanted a sexual revolution in which women were released from marital contracts so they could be held in common by men.

A key component of Critical Theory was its integration of Marxism with Darwinism and Freudianism. Factoring Freud into the equation was a controversial notion because he was generally held in low esteem by traditional Marxists who understood human psychology in terms of Pavlovian behaviorism. Philosophically, Freudianism was inherently counter-revolutionary in that it discounted the primacy of economics in human social evolution in favor of liberation through psychoanalysis. Rather than a violent external revolution that immediately liberated the masses, the Freudian revolution was peaceful, deliberative, internal and individual. In traditional Marxist circles, Freudianism was viewed as an unwelcome complication that disrupted the sublime simplicity of the whole Marxist dialectic of history.

But as proud and independent Marxist revisionists, the Frankfurt scholars saw great potential in utilizing Freud as a useful ally in their efforts to undermine traditional Western values and culture. Like Freud, they considered sexual repression to be a hindrance to societal evolution. According to Horkheimer and others, bourgeois society is inherently sexually repressed, which is a major factor in neurosis and other forms of mental illness. They believed that a revolutionary, post-capitalist and post-Christian society could liberate humanity from this repression, so sexual liberation from the restrictions of a patriarchal

society was a major theme in their ideology.

In this regard, the social psychologists Eric Fromm and Wilhelm Reich played key roles in the integration of Marx and Freud. Fromm contended that sexual orientation is merely a social construct, there are no innate differences between men and women, and that sexuality and gender roles are socially determined. Furthermore, he argued that sexually-repressed societies discourage sexual experimentation and practices such as homosexuality due to manmade legal codes and moralistic taboos that are psychologically inhibiting and counter-productive. All this does is increase the angst-level in society and keep people in a perpetual state of frustration.

The psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich was one of the originators of "sexual politics" and, like Fromm, an outspoken sex propagandist. Based on a Darwinian evolutionary view of humanity, Reich argued that human beings are fundamentally sexual animals. For Reich, sexuality is an innate impulse that should not be inhibited by artificial and manmade moral restrictions. In his book, *The Sexual Revolution*, he argued that sexual repression was an underlying cause of many psycho/social pathologies, and he laid much of the blame on "familial imperialism" that is perpetuated through the authoritarian structure of the traditional family. In fact, according to Reich, "familial imperialism" is the root cause of "national imperialism."

The authoritarian family is the authoritarian state in miniature. Man's authoritarian character structure is basically produced by the embedding of sexual inhibitions and fear in the living substance of sexual impulses. Familial imperialism is ideologically reproduced in national imperialism....

The authoritarian family... is a factory where reactionary ideology and reactionary structures are produced. [Quoted by Raymond V. Raehn in "The Historical Roots of 'Political Correctness,'" in William S. Lind, *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. [www.freecongress.org](http://www.freecongress.org).]



Wilhelm Reich

Reich's solution, as he argued in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), was to replace the traditional patriarchal family with a matriarchal model, which he regarded as the only truly "natural" order of things. This was part of a comprehensive sexual revolution, which according to Reich should include the legalization of homosexuality and abortion, in order to foster a more "natural" and "healthy" society. Of course, all this sounds suspiciously similar to the sexual propaganda later spouted by the likes of Alfred Kinsey and Hugh Hefner, who themselves were influenced by Reich and Fromm, among others. The great attraction, of course – other than the obvious fact that it appeals to our base instincts – is the pseudo-scientific basis for it.

[NOTE: Reich's aggressive advocacy of sexual politics was too extreme even for most of his fellow-radicals at the time. In the early 1930s he was expelled from both the Communist Party and the International Psychoanalytical Association, and in 1939 he emigrated to America. In 1942 he founded the Orgone Society, which advocated free sex and mental health through "the power of the orgasm." Years later, the Food & Drug Administration sued Reich for fraud, and he died in prison in 1957.]

In terms of long-range influence, the most significant Frankfurt School sex propagandist was Herbert Marcuse. Like his colleagues, Fromm and Reich, Marcuse understood that a true cultural revolution would include sexual liberation along with political and economic transformation. In this regard, he called for the casting off of all traditional values and sexual restraints, to be replaced by what he termed "polymorphous perversity." Even the concept of marital love and fidelity was counter-revolutionary, according to Marcuse. Although cultural change was the ultimate goal, what seemed to primarily stimulate him was the pleasure principle. Like the radical French Jacobins a century-and-a-half earlier, Marcuse questioned, "What good is a revolution without general copulation?"

## Neo-Marxism and Popular Culture Political Protest Music

In Martin Jay's book, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School*, his chapter on "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture" is particularly insightful given the enormous influence of popular culture in our society. Of course, much of popular culture – including most music, movies, television, etc. – is merely crass entertainment, and as such much of it is trivial, banal and inconsequential (except for the fact that reflects the feelings and the shallow thinking of so many people). Nonetheless, some popular entertainment is truly significant and its cumulative effect is substantial. Although the following comments refer primarily to popular music, many of these observations generally apply to other forms of mass entertainment, too.

Social observers have long recognized the power of song. Reportedly, Plato commented that if he could write the popular songs of his culture, he cared not who wrote the laws. In other words, like the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School, Plato understood that culture drives politics, not vice-versa. As novelist John Steinbeck once noted, popular music expresses the most fundamental values and beliefs of a people and constitutes the "sharpest statement" about who and what they are. According to Steinbeck, we can learn more about a society by listening to its songs than by any other means of observation, since "into the songs go all their hopes and hurts, the anger, fears, the wants and aspirations." Leo Lowenthal, a leading theorist in the Frankfurt School, expressed the same idea when he wrote that "mass culture is psychoanalysis in reverse."

Popular culture, including music, has always functioned as a kind of social barometer, and throughout history the significant issues and events of the day have often been expressed through the medium of popular music. From the broadside ballads of the Revolutionary era to the campfire sing-alongs of the Civil War, from Joe Hill's radical labor anthems of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the Depression-era Dust Bowl ballads of Woody Guthrie, from the folk and rock socio/political commentaries of the 1960s to the nihilistic rantings of contemporary punk and rap, popular music has often expressed the *Zeitgeist* – the spirit of the times. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century hundreds of popular songs functioned as socio/political musical editorials, and although most were quickly forgotten and left little lasting



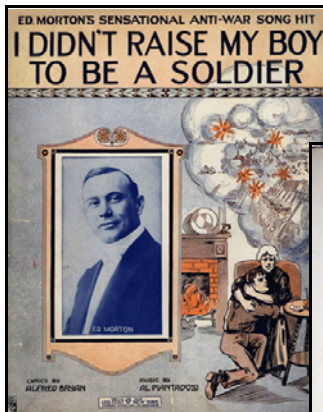
impression, some were quite profound and undeniably influential.

[NOTE: Before the advent of the phonograph and the radio, popular music was indistinguishable from folk music in that one generation's popular songs became the folk songs of succeeding generations. It wasn't until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the evolution of a commercial music industry, that popular music became a distinct category from folk music.]

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century social protest songs often disguised their messages, such as in the Mother Goose rhymes. However, with the coalescence of several different reform movements in the early 1900s, socio/political protest music became more open and explicit. In particular, the radical left-wing of the labor movement, as characterized by the Marxist-oriented Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), utilized music very effectively to rally the troops and promote its agenda. Labor anthems, such as those composed by songwriters such as Joe Hill (see below), contained sharp and explicit lyrics and were sung with revivalistic fervor by the union faithful.

Since popular music echoes the spirit of the times, socio/political message songs tend to proliferate during times of crisis and turmoil. This was certainly the case during World War I when Tin Pan Alley songwriters churned out scores of topical songs related to the war – everything from the anti-war “I Didn’t Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier” to flag-waving anthems

such as “Over There” and social commentaries like “How Ya Gonna



Keep ‘em Down on the Farm (After They’ve Seen Poree)?” During the raucous and prosperous Roaring

Twenties very few serious socio/ political commentaries were written and recorded, but following the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the

onset of the Great Depression there was once again a flurry of socio/political musical commentaries. Many of these songs, such as “Happy Days Are Here Again” and “There’s No Depression In Love,” were slick and jazzy productions designed to revive the flagging spirits of the American people, while others dealt more seriously with social realities such as “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” “Hobo’s Lullaby,” and many of Woody Guthrie’s songs.

Likewise, World War II inspired scores of songs that echoed the times – e.g., Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America,” “Remember Pearl Harbor,” Johnny Mercer’s “G.I. Jive,” The Andrews Sisters’ “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition,” “Coming In On a Wing and a Prayer,” Peggy Lee’s “Waiting For the Train To Come In,” and many others. In the relatively placid Fifties few songs dealt with themes other than romance (e.g., Elvis Presley’s “Love Me, Tender,” Pat Boone’s “Love Letters In the Sand,” etc.) or the pursuit of pleasure (Bill Haley & the Comets’ “Rock Around the Clock,” Chuck Berry’s “Sweet Little Sixteen,” etc.). Then, the turbulent 1960s once again produced a great outpouring of socio/ political topical songs. But unlike the past, this time counter-cultural themes dominated the music, and the lyrics tended to be overwhelmingly critical of mainstream American lifestyles and values.

Since the Sixties popular music in general has gotten even more cynical and jaded. Much of it has become a celebration of decadence, and the glorification of sex, drugs, violence, irresponsible hedonism and mindless materialism is certainly cause for alarm. If Britney Spears, Madonna, Eminem, the hip-hoppers and the gangsta rappers speak for a critical mass of young people today, this is truly disturbing. And although most of this music is not overtly political, the very fact that these people are pop culture icons is a damning indictment of the state of our culture.

Many people wonder why so much popular music is so ugly, so degenerate, so sexualized, so obscene, and so fixated on drugs and violence. Since all art is an expression of philosophy and moral values, much of this is due to the insidious influence of Nihilism and Postmodernism on contemporary American culture. But some of it directly reflects a Neo-Marxist political ideology as well. To radical left-wing social critics, the reason why so much modern art expresses such rage and dissatisfaction is because it reflects the



realities of living in a repressive and oppressive society under the heavy yoke of capitalist exploitation and traditional Christian-influenced moral values.

Cultural Marxists argue that all of life is a struggle against the forces of oppression and repression. Originally, classical Marxism focused rather narrowly on economic oppression and class conflict, but by the 1930s Neo-Marxists began to widen the scope of their cultural critique to include a broader range of social issues and even psychological factors – in particular, issues related to sexual repression. In their condemnation of Western culture, they emphasized social injustice and the plight of marginalized minorities – those victims of the bourgeois social order that included the working classes, racial minorities, radical feminists, homosexuals, and non-Christians in general. Therefore, it was within the context of their Neo-Marxist Critical Theory that they encouraged the politicization of the arts as part of a full-scale assault on Western culture.

Among cultural Marxists there have been two competing theories regarding the proper role of revolutionary art. The first approach, which Lenin sanctioned and has always been the most common, focuses on content. In this approach art is an expression of agitprop (agitation/propaganda), and it emphasizes overtly social and political messages. However, these messages may be either relatively mild and suggestive or harsh and confrontational. Examples of the former would include many of the socio/political protest songs of the early Sixties such as Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" and Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." By the mid-Sixties much of the protest music became more explicit and aggressive, as characterized by songs such as Dylan's "The Times They Are A-changin'," Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction," The Beatles' "Revolution," or "I Feel Like I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag" by Country Joe & the Fish.

The alternative theory of revolutionary art emphasizes form rather than content. As such, its messages are often more stylistic than overtly propagandistic. This approach has been incorporated into



various types of avant-garde music such as atonal free form jazz (most notably, the music of John Cage), the extended guitar "freak-outs" that were popular among some rock bands in the Sixties, and in recordings such as John Lennon's bizarre "Revolution No. 9" on The Beatles' *White Album*. More recently, much of rap, hip-hop and heavy metal music emphasize form over content. In much of this music the lyrics and the messages are vague, inarticulate or even unintelligible, but the mood is obviously angry, aggressive and anti-social. In such music, form trumps content and, to borrow Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum, the medium *is* the message. Despite the lack of any clearly articulated or intelligible message, such music can function as a potent expression of socio/political protest.

Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School's most prominent cultural analyst, was a staunch advocate of the form over content approach. Adorno began his academic career as a music critic, and as a doctrinaire Marxist he had a peculiar take on music as a political statement. He was contemptuous of popular culture in general, which he regarded as bourgeois, frivolous and counter-revolutionary, and as a musicologist he was particularly scornful of popular music, which he considered trivial, insipid and banal – which of course most of it was (and always has been).

But Adorno was more than just a cultural elitist, and he held a radical view of art and culture that few would accept. According to him, since modern bourgeois culture is intrinsically "repressive," art could only be "authentic" if it were non-commercial, dissonant and alienating. In other words, any art form, such as music, that conveyed joy or contentment or harmony was at best an expression of ignorance or at worst an affirmation of the authoritarian status quo. Declaring that "defiance of society includes defiance of its language," Adorno might also have added that defiance of society includes not only defiance of its traditional values but its art forms as well. As he stated, "We interpret [art] as a kind of code language for processes taking place within society, which must be deciphered by means of critical analysis."

[NOTE Marxism has long been recognized as a kind of surrogate religion. As such, it shares some common perspectives with Christianity, such as a deep longing for transcendence beyond present realities. Also, like Christians, Marxists rejected the popular notion that art is merely an

expression of the individual creativity of artists themselves. Art is not values-free or values-neutral. Wittingly or not, all art expresses the beliefs and ideals of its creators, and the concept of artistic creative freedom is in many respects illusory. Unlike Christians, however, Marxists were strict determinists who believed that sociological factors alone *determine* people's values. Christians don't deny that society and culture can *influence* (or *condition*) our values, but human beings still have a measure of free choice as a result of being created in the *imago Dei* – the image of God. Still, like Marxists, Christians believe that the ultimate goal of art is not merely individual expression but a reflection of truth and reality.]

According to Adorno, until current social and political alienation and contradictions were reconciled in reality, the utopian harmony of art must always reflect the current dissonance. For him, everything was political, and since bourgeois capitalistic society was innately discordant and repressive, the only legitimately authentic music was that which avoided commercialism and “spurious harmony” and expressed the “contradictions” of modern life. Furthermore, he reasoned, just as true artistic creativity was determined by social factors, so too was people's subjective appreciation of art. This is why popular culture, including virtually all popular music, was so deplorably vacuous: it expressed bourgeois values and the unsophisticated tastes of the masses, who were the psychologically oppressed products of a bourgeois capitalistic system and its propaganda. The People needed to be liberated from such constraints, and Adorno believed this could be accomplished in part through true art and true music, which was innately revolutionary and counter-cultural. As he expressed it...

A successful work [of art]... is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure....

Art... always was, and is, a force of protest of the humane against the pressure of domineering institutions, religious and otherwise....” [Quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 179]

For Adorno, even modern jazz, which many conservatives feared was promoting sensuality and undermining traditional morality, should be rejected as just another commercial commodity.

Observing that it served primarily as dance or ambient background music, he challenged the claim that jazz was sexually liberating. In fact, he contended, rather than transcending alienation, jazz music actually strengthened it by reconciling the alienated individual with mainstream culture.

Prior to Adorno, most criticism of popular culture came from social conservatives. Now, however, it was attacked as a tool of the status quo that pacified the masses and diverted their attention away from all the oppression, repression and social injustice inherent in American culture. As such, it was part of a massive bourgeois capitalist conspiracy. Martin Jay explains:

The Frankfurt School disliked mass culture, not because it was democratic, but precisely because it was not.... The culture industry administered a nonspontaneous [and] phony culture rather than the real thing. The old distinction between high and low culture had all but vanished in the ‘stylized barbarism’ of mass culture.... The subliminal message of almost all that passed for art was conformity and resignation.

Increasingly, the Institute came to feel that the culture industry enslaved men in far more subtle and effective ways than the crude methods of domination practiced in earlier eras. The false harmony [promoted in popular culture] was in some ways more sinister than the clash of social contradictions, because of its ability to lull its victims into passive acceptance.... Moreover, the spread of technology served the culture industry in America just as it helped tighten the control of authoritarian governments in Europe. Radio, Horkheimer and Adorno argued, was to fascism as the printing press had been to the Reformation .... [Ibid, pp. 216-17]

In his study of the Frankfurt School, Jay concludes that the Institute's greatest impact on American intellectual life was its critique of mass culture along with its analysis of American authoritarianism (see below, “Fascist Amerika”).

But Adorno's philosophy of culture and music was too extreme even for many of his Neo-Marxist colleagues, some of whom challenged his basic assumptions. Walter Benjamin, a notable philosopher and essayist, expressed the more orthodox Marxist view that came to prevail among most left-wing social critics and activists. Unlike Adorno, Benjamin recognized the immense potential of agitprop commercial entertainment, and he contended that popular



music could be a potent political weapon in the culture war in terms of undermining traditional values, radicalizing the masses and transforming culture. Adorno was unconvinced, and argued that any such attempts to integrate “socialist realism” into commercial popular music only succeeded in promoting the kind of “premature harmony” that was in fact counter-revolutionary.

Most left-wing artists took Benjamin’s view because Adorno’s more radical critique essentially eliminated any audience for their art. In this regard the playwright Bertolt Brecht was particularly significant in his utilization of the theater as a political forum to explore what he called “the critical aesthetics of dialectical materialism.” Brecht inspired a whole new generation of Marxist artists and entertainers, and his influence was particularly significant in films and the theater. Meanwhile, in America, perhaps the most successful and influential propagandist for the Marxist cause was the actor and movie producer, Charlie Chaplin, whose comic genius in films such as *Modern Times* and *The Great Dictator* skillfully and subtly promoted the left-wing agenda.

Adorno’s eccentric views aside, many Marxists understood intuitively the power of politicized music as a social and cultural force. As noted earlier, the IWW was a radical Marxist labor union in the early 1900s that included a fragile and volatile coalition of Communists, socialists and anarchists. According to its Manifesto, the union was founded on “the class struggle” and “the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class,” and its motto proclaimed, “The final aim is revolution.” IWW rallies often resembled religious revivals with stirring, emotional speeches and a lot of group singing. Songwriters such as Joe Hill converted scores of well-known church hymns into labor anthems, and the IWW even published its own hymnal of sorts, the *Little Red Songbook*, featuring songs such as “Solidarity Forever,” sung to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”



Charlie Chaplin

They [the bourgeois capitalists] have taken  
untold millions  
That they never toiled to earn  
But without our brain and muscle  
Not a single wheel can turn  
We can break their haughty power  
Gain our freedom when we learn  
That the union makes us strong.  
(CHORUS)  
Solidarity forever!  
Solidarity forever!  
Solidarity forever!  
For the union makes us strong!

[NOTE: Like most other left-wing groups, the IWW was constantly racked by internal sectarian disputes and power struggles. During World War I it lost most of its members, and many of its leaders were charged with treason and sent to prison. “Big Bill” Haywood, the public face of the union, evaded prison by fleeing to the USSR, where he was treated as a celebrity by Lenin’s regime. When he died in 1928, Haywood was buried in the Kremlin – one of only two Americans so honored. In its short but colorful history, the IWW produced quite a few memorable characters including the firebrand agitator, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Joe Hill, America’s first left-wing protest singer/songwriter.]

In 1914, on the eve before he was scheduled to be hanged, Joe Hill explained his rationale for writing political protest songs:

A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read more than once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over. I maintain that if a person can put a few cold, common sense facts into a song, and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them, he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers who are too unintelligent or too indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial.



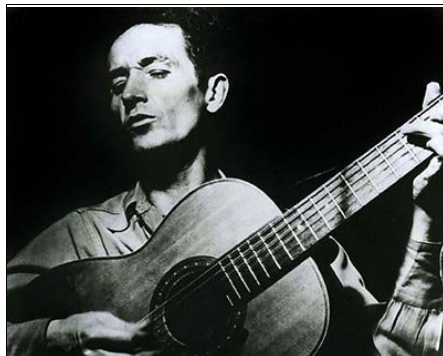
Joe Hill

[NOTE: Joe Hill was a Swedish immigrant and a professional provocateur who, according to American left-wing lore, was hanged by local authorities for his courageous stand against injustice on behalf of the downtrodden working class. From point of fact, he was executed for murdering two men. At the 1969 Woodstock music festival, folk balladeer Joan Baez momentarily resurrected the dormant memory of this early working class hero with her lilting rendition of “Joe Hill,” but few in the crowd had a clue who she was singing about.]

Left-wing protest music was not a factor in American popular music during the Roaring Twenties, but with the coming of the Great Depression dozens of topical songs related to the times were played on the radio and became hits. Some American leftists, along with their European counterparts such as Theodor Adorno, considered all commercial popular music to be bourgeois and counter-revolutionary, but others saw great potential in exploiting the medium for propaganda purposes. Still, American Communists generally looked at popular music with suspicion if not outright contempt. Popular music was mostly Broadway show tunes, formulaic Tin Pan Alley love songs, and hyper-kinetic jazz, and most doctrinaire Marxists dismissed the commercial music industry as just another capitalistic scam operation.

Instead, the American left preferred the socio/political folk-style music of performers such as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and the Almanac Singers. In their minds, folk music was the music of “The People” and therefore an “authentic” art form, and operating outside the commercial music industry, it was itself a protest against capitalism.

Furthermore, politicized folk music avoided the kind of “spurious harmony” – both thematically and musically – that



Woody Guthrie

Marxists like Adorno detested. Unlike slick commercial jazz and sentimentalistic love ballads sung by professional crooners, folk-style music was plain and

unadorned. It featured simple instrumentation, and songs were sung (or in many cases, croaked, howled, wheezed, whined, growled or rasped) in a down-home style by singers with gloriously untrained voices. The “beauty” of the song was in its message rather than the melody, the instrumentation or the vocals. Therefore, a warbler like Woody Guthrie could be hailed as a great singer and musician when in fact he could not have sounded worse if he’d been born without vocal cords. (Nor would his guitar playing have suffered much had his fingers been webbed.)

The folksong genre remained the officially sanctioned and preferred medium for left-wing music into the 1960s. As a young music phenom, Bob Dylan mastered the genre and wrote some of the defining protest songs of the early Sixties such as “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Masters of War” and “The Times They Are A-changin’.” But he soon grew tired of acoustic folk music because it was too restrictive, and when he formed a rock band and went electric, folk purists such as Pete Seeger went ballistic. For Seeger and other left-wing ideologues, authentic political music *was* folk music, and they regarded Dylan as a



Pete Seeger

commercial sell-out to the capitalistic music industry. This opinion didn’t last long, however, as other gifted songwriters such as Paul Simon and Phil Ochs converted to rock.

By the late 1960s, left-wing themes and influences had thoroughly infiltrated American pop culture in music, movies, the theater and even TV. In the end, the elitism of a Theodore Adorno was discarded for very practical reasons: a Marxist agenda could very effectively be communicated to mass audiences through mass marketing and new technologies. If the ultimate goal was cultural infiltration and social change, concessions had to be made to the realities of modern life. In fact, being almost entirely consumer-driven and virtually devoid of any quality control, there was not a medium more open and susceptible to left-wing propaganda than popular culture.

## American Neo-Marxism

### The Columbia Connection

When Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany in 1933, the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research was shut down “for tendencies hostile to the state” and most of its library confiscated. Horkheimer was one of the first scholars to be dismissed from Frankfurt University along with luminaries such as the theologian Paul Tillich and the psychologist Karl Mannheim. Seeing the proverbial handwriting on the wall, most of the Institute’s faculty and staff fled Germany, and the trustees considered reestablishing the school in Geneva, London or Paris. Significantly, they never considered seeking sanctuary in Stalin’s Russia.

In previous years the Institute had developed contacts with prominent Americans such as the Marxist historian Charles Beard, the sociologist Robert MacIver, and the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, all of whom were associated with Columbia University in New York City. When Horkheimer visited the U.S. in May, 1934, he was received by Columbia’s president, Nicholas Murray Butler. Much to Horkheimer’s surprise, Butler offered the Institute of Social Research affiliation with the university, including offices and classrooms in one of the university’s buildings. As Martin Jay recounts the story...

Horkheimer, fearing he had misunderstood Butler because of his limited command of English, wrote a four-page letter asking him to confirm and clarify his offer. Butler’s response was a laconic “You have understood me perfectly!” And so the International Institute for Social Research, as revolutionary and Marxist as it had appeared in Frankfurt in the 1920s, came to settle in the center of the capitalist world, New York City. [Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973, 1993), p. 39.]

With that, the Institute of Social Research was reestablished at Columbia University and became a haven for Frankfurt School scholars throughout the 1930s and until the end of World War II. In the foreword of the first issue of the Institute’s *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* published in America, Horkheimer acknowledged his and his colleagues’ good fortune, and the peace and security that the United States offered. In his words...

Philosophy, art, and science have lost their home in most of Europe. England is now fighting desperately against the

domination of the totalitarian states. America, especially the United States, is the only continent in which the continuation of scientific life is possible. Within the framework of this country’s democratic institutions, culture still enjoys the freedom without which, we believe, it is unable to exist. [Quoted in Martin Jay, p. 167.]

The great irony, of course, was that while America was providing sanctuary to Horkheimer’s group, they were working to undermine the very traditions and “democratic institutions” that accorded them safety and security. Although Horkheimer portrayed the Institute as a non-political “scientific” think-tank, he and his associates applied the same principles of Critical Theory they had developed in Germany to American society and culture as they focused on two priorities:

(1) A critique of German National Socialism (Nazism), which they disingenuously caricatured, along with Italian Fascism, as “right-wing” totalitarian ideologies. In the process, they linked Nazism and capitalism to the extent that Horkheimer declared that those who refrained from criticizing capitalism forfeited the right to criticize Nazism.

(2) A critique of American authoritarianism, including a withering attack on the evils such as racism in American society and culture. Just as classism had been the greatest vulnerability in European society and culture, racism has been America’s most persistent problem. In the early 1920s Trotsky predicted that just as the oppressed proletariat constituted the revolutionary vanguard in classical Marxist thought, oppressed blacks could be formed into a revolutionary vanguard in America. This was a form of Marxist revisionism that Lenin (and later Stalin) would condemn as heretical and “counter-revolutionary,” but Horkheimer and his colleagues regarded it not only as a concession to reality but an opportunity.

In classical Marxism the proletariat class was the designated catalyst for bringing down the old order and ushering in the new. But in the 1930s labor unions had entered into collective bargaining agreements with management, and the material conditions in modern industrial societies such as the U.S. were such that the working classes had been co-opted by the allure of materialism and the promise of a rising standards of living. As such, they were no longer suited for the revolutionary role, and Neo-Marxist theoreticians no longer felt bound exclusively to



the interests of the proletariat. Instead, they were willing to ally with any and all “progressive” forces that were dedicated to the revolution.

As Horkheimer and his colleagues settled into America in the 1930s, racial bigotry and discrimination were pervasive and blatant. The Frankfurt scholars viewed this situation as a golden opportunity, and they effectively exploited the situation in their efforts to forge a new revolutionary alliance of victims – i.e., blacks, Jews, and the traditional proletariat classes of factory workers, farmers and menial laborers – along with their sympathizers in academia, the media, and in the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA). A standing joke among Greenwich Village Communists in the 1930s was this exchange between two Party members discussing an upcoming cell meeting: “You bring the Negro, and I’ll bring the folksinger.” They could have added, “And we’ll ask another comrade to bring the Jewish intellectual.”

All social and political systems are flawed, and all are deserving of serious examination and criticism. But there were two fundamental problems with Neo-Marxist Critical Theory: First, it is based on a seriously defective naturalistic worldview that, among other things, provides no philosophical basis for judging the morality or goodness of anything; and second, Critical Theory was exclusively a one-way street. While subjecting America and Western Europe to intense and withering criticism, Horkheimer and his colleagues were incredibly naive (or simply cowardly) when it came to the Soviet Union. In this respect they were guilty of employing a deplorable double-standard. While expressing outrage over racial bigotry in the United States, for instance, they found it excruciatingly difficult to criticize Stalin’s totalitarian dictatorship. Even in the late 1930s, after Stalin had murdered millions of Soviet citizens in the Ukrainian Terror Famine and the various Purges, they remained almost totally silent, and in 1946 Horkheimer declared that “at present the only country where there does not seem to be any kind of anti-Semitism is Russia.” Almost as if on-cue, when asked about Communist atrocities and Soviet gulags, their typical response was, “But what about the Negroes in the South?” – as if there was a moral equivalency between the two.

When the Institute of Social Research relocated in America, it lost much of its funding.

The costs associated with resettling and employing more than a dozen refugee scholars, along with poor investments in the stock market and disastrous real estate transactions severely strained the Institute’s economic resources. [Yes, you read that right: the Neo-Marxist and anti-capitalist ISR invested heavily in the capitalistic system.] In fact, had it not been for the financial support of the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee, the Institute might have ceased to exist.

With the coming of World War II, several associates of the ISR, including Herbert Marcuse, found employment in Washington, D.C. in government agencies such as the Board of Economic Warfare, the Office of War Information, and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS – the forerunner of the CIA). During the war most of the Institute’s members became American citizens. A small staff, headed by Leo Lowenthal and Friedrich Pollock, continued to operate out of the Institute’s New York office until June, 1944 when the building was turned over to the U.S. Navy. At that point the ISR was relocated in smaller offices in Columbia’s Low Memorial Library, and by 1949 the Institute was no longer associated with the university.

In 1941 Horkheimer and Adorno relocated to Pacific Palisades near Santa Monica, California, where they joined other German leftists such as the playwright Bertolt Brecht. Unfortunately, no substantive histories have been written that explore their Hollywood connections during these years or their influence in the movie and TV industries. But in 1947, during the height of the post-war “Red Scare,” the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was sufficiently concerned about Communist influence in the Hollywood entertainment industry that it held extensive hearings and subpoenaed more than 40 writers, directors, actors and producers. Ten of those called before the committee – the infamous “Hollywood Ten” – refused to testify and were cited for contempt. Many of the others were blacklisted by TV and movie studio bosses, including the singer/songwriter, Pete Seeger, who was kept off television for 20 years until he was finally invited to appear on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in 1967. With characteristic defiance, he sang an anti-war song, “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” dedicated to President Johnson.

## The Sixties

After World War II Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Germany and reestablished the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt. Over the next several years, approximately 50 scholars who had been associated with the Institute obtained faculty positions in American universities. Of these, Herbert Marcuse emerged as the most notable. Through his teaching and writings, he became the key link between the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School and the American New Left movement of the 1960s.

The New Left incorporated the seminal ideas of Critical Theory in its critique of America as a fascist and repressive state. For left-wing activists in the Sixties, Critical Theory was far more appealing than classical Marxism for 3 reasons:

(1) It provided a comprehensive deconstruction of American culture as innately racist, sexist, imperialistic, and consumer-obsessed;

(2) It incorporated the arts and popular culture into the cultural revolution; and

(3) It celebrated sexual liberation and a rejection of traditional moral values.

The single most significant influence on the ideology of the New Left was Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, published in 1955. In the book, Marcuse argued that most of the angst and hang-ups and neuroses that young people feel are the result of sexual repression.

The solution was "non-repressive society" in which libertarian socialistic values prevailed – i.e., an egalitarian society in which individuals were free to pursue their own hedonistic instincts. Marcuse coined the phrase, "Make love, not war," and his call for sexual liberation is sometimes cited as the inspiration behind popular Sixties' slogans such as "Do your own thing" and "If it feels good, do it." Such was his influence, both in America and Europe, that during the student uprisings in France in May of 1968, activists carried signs that read, "Marx/Mao/Marcuse."

The 1960s was one of the most turbulent periods in American history. As Richard Bernstein, a reporter for the *New York Times*, later

noted in *Dictatorship of Virtue: Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future* (1993), "Thirty years ago, something shifted in the national mind." Bernstein might have added that thirty years earlier something also shifted in the *rational* mind that set the stage for the chaos to come. Beginning in 1960 with the formation of the premier New Left student activist group of the Sixties, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), continuing through the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964 and the massive campus disruptions of the late Sixties, and culminating with the Kent State killings in the spring of 1970, American society and culture went through convulsions – the aftershocks of which are still felt today.



Throughout the ordeal, the left gradually gained strength and expanded its influence through the steady

infiltration of higher education, the media, American Christianity, and other key areas of influence in American public life. (In the Frankfurt School, this strategy of infiltration and cultural subversion was referred to as "the long march through the institutions" – a reference to Mao Zedong's Long March to eventual victory in the Chinese Civil War.) Throughout the 1960s, with the escalation of the Vietnam War, many college and university graduates enrolled in master's programs in hopes of evading the draft, and some of the most radical eventually earned Ph.D.'s with the intention of transforming American society through the education system. (Of all the Ph.D. degrees granted by American universities from 1860-1970, half were granted in the 1960s.)

By the mid-to-late 1970s many of these former student radicals were moving into positions as junior faculty and administrators, and by the early 1980s they were firmly entrenched in most universities and attaining tenure. Gradually, liberal arts faculties became more radical as Neo-Marxists began replacing older New Deal liberals who retired, and over time a rigid left-wing ideology prevailed in many departments. As Martin Jay has written, "it cannot be doubted that Critical Theory has achieved... a secure – perhaps ironically even a canonical – status as a central



theoretical impulse in contemporary academic life.”

Likewise, in radio, television and print media, just as former Sixties activists came to dominate in higher education, they moved into positions of influence in the mainstream media. As their power increased, they grew bolder and more aggressive. Borrowing a key tactic from Lenin and the cultural Marxists of an earlier period, liberals and radical leftists began labeling conservative ideas “politically incorrect.” The implication was that only liberal elitists truly understood the parameters of political orthodoxy, and that any ideas outside those boundaries were ignorant, unrealistic, and/or immoral.

### Fascist Amerika

A basic premise of Neo-Marxist ideology is that traditional America is innately Fascist – hence, the spelling of “Amerika” with a ‘k’ in left-wing propaganda. According to this theory, there is a latent Fascism in the American soul as a result of America’s heritage of capitalism, racism, sexism, imperialism and Christianity. Several prominent Frankfurt School scholars put forth this idea, including Wilhelm Reich in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933) and Eric Fromm in *Studies on Authority and the Family* (1936), which concluded that sado-masochism was the core characteristic of the authoritarian/Fascist personality. (Fromm later disavowed this thesis.) Max Horkheimer also weighed in on the issue in a 1950 essay entitled “The Lessons of Fascism,” in which he associated the authoritarian personality with a set of generalized character traits that included an acceptance of conventional values, respect for authority, stereotypical thinking, “a penchant for superstition” (i.e., religion), and prejudice toward one’s opponents.

The most extensive study of the subject was Theodor Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), in which he sought to verify statistically a theory of the prototypical Fascist personality as linked to a particular set of conventional moral and cultural values. According to Adorno, these authoritarian traits, which are reinforced and nurtured through the traditional patriarchal family, contribute to certain character traits that condition many Americans to accept Fascism and socio/political repression.

*The Authoritarian Personality* promoted a view of psycho-politics based on Freud’s dubious theory of the unconscious. Despite such a scientifically-

questionable foundation, Adorno argued passionately and with an air of authority. He was scathing in his contempt for conservatives and traditionalists, whom he argued were not merely wrong-headed but mentally disturbed. According to Adorno, the only mentally healthy person is the “genuine liberal” – fiercely independent, tolerant (except, of course, toward traditionalists), and committed to egalitarianism and “social justice” (as defined, of course, by the radical left).

From a marketing standpoint, a major attraction of the book was Adorno’s construction of an “F-Scale” (Fascist-Scale) rating system based on nine personality variables incorporating several terms that are currently associated with Political Correctness. According to Adorno, the Fascist character type strongly identifies with the following traits:

- Conventionalism. Rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values.
- Authoritarian submission. A submissive and uncritical attitude toward authority figures.
- Authoritarian aggression. The inclination to apply or enforce conventional values on others.
- Anti-intraception. Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, or the intuitive.
- Superstition and stereotypy. The belief in the supernatural or mystical determinism, and the disposition to think in rigid categories (i.e., racial, ethnic and gender prejudice).
- Power and “toughness.” A preoccupation with dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower; identification with power figures; exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness.
- Destructiveness and cynicism. Generalized hostility and the tendency to vilify others.
- Projectivity. “The disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world” (i.e., a conspiratorial mindset).
- Sex. An exaggerated concern with conventional sexual morality and a preoccupation with other people’s sexual practices. [Source: Martin Jay, p. 243.]

Borrowing from Freud and Fromm, Adorno contended that the breeding ground for the “authoritarian syndrome” was the patriarchal family headed by a “stern and distant” father. In such scenarios, he argued, children repress their innate hostility while becoming passive/aggressive, which produces serious mental



disorders such as sado-masochism. By contrast, the families of mentally healthy children were more matriarchal, less conventional, less status-conscious, and less demanding. In such families the parents were loving and affectionate, but the mother, who was nurturing but also strong and independent, was clearly dominant.

According to Adorno, this explained why the Fascist personality lacked empathy and compassion for others. Originally, he identified the antithesis of the authoritarian Fascist as the principled and mentally-healthy “revolutionary,” but when he finally published his study he referred to this alternative character type as a “liberal” or a “democrat” – terms that were considerably less controversial. The prototypical liberal was an independent thinker who was committed to “progressive social change” and who, coincidentally, held the same values and bore the same characteristics as Adorno and his Neo-Marxist colleagues. Adorno had found himself in his own research, which must have come as a most pleasant surprise.

[NOTE: Many have pointed out the subjective and problematical nature of Adorno’s research as well as his simplistic caricature of conservatives. For substantive critiques see Paul Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State* (Princeton University Press, 2001), and the notes accompanying Martin Jay’s *The Dialectical Imagination*. Particularly noteworthy are those who criticized Adorno’s political bias in the study. Edward Shils, for example, questioned why authoritarianism was associated with Fascism alone and not Communism, and why was the F Scale not a ‘C Scale’ or a ‘T Scale’ (for Totalitarian)? Obviously, despite all their rhetoric about “toleration,” leftists such as Adorno were every bit as biased and intolerant as the conservatives whom they despised. See Martin Jay, pp. 244-48.]

Adorno’s thesis that America is innately Fascist is transparently self-refuting. The very fact that radical leftists like him were free to propagate their views contradicted his argument. If America is so racist, xenophobic and repressive, why does it continue to attract hordes of immigrants, and why do virtually all those who come here (legally) also choose to stay? The facts tend to speak for themselves, and in fact there is no country in the world where citizens in general, and racial and ethnic minorities in particular, enjoy more civil liberties, more opportunities, and a higher

standard of living than in the United States.

Rather than support the Neo-Marxist thesis of Fascist Amerika, the evidence indicates that Fascism and authoritarianism – such as the McCarthy witch-hunt of the early 1950s, are anomalies in American history. As the former Sixties radicals Peter Collier and David Horowitz point out in *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts on the Sixties*, the McCarthy phenomenon and the Red Scare were merely a blip on the radar screen of American history.

The history of McCarthyism shows how alien the witch-hunt mentality is to the American spirit and how superficial its hold on the American psyche. Appearing in the extraordinary circumstances of the postwar period, McCarthyism was brief in its moment and limited in its consequences. And it was complete in the way it was purged from the body politic. The Wisconsin senator’s strut on the stage ended in a crushing repudiation by his colleagues. [Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts on the Sixties*, p. 196]

From point of fact, as even the Neo-Marxist M.I.T. professor, Noam Chomsky, has admitted, the whole Fascist Amerika line is a fabrication. As Chomsky concedes, the United States is “the greatest” and “the freest country in the world.”

I don’t just mean in terms of limits on state coercion, though that’s true, too, but also in terms of individual relations. The United States comes closest to classlessness in terms of interpersonal relations than virtually any society. [“Interview with Noam Chomsky and Bill Bennett,” *American Morning with Paula Zahn*. CNN (May 30, 2002). Tim Adams, “Noam Chomsky: Thorn in America’s Side.” *The Observer* (10/30/2003).]

A post-script: One obvious problem with Critical Theory is that it is entirely an open-ended strategy with no fixed point or realistic destination or standard of measurement. At what point does one find respite in the pursuit of utopian perfectionism? All human systems are flawed, and those seeking socio/political salvation in this world will never find satisfaction. Even the proponents of Critical Theory admitted that its truths could not be assessed or critiqued, verified or falsified, by reference to the present order for the simple reason that the present order is hopelessly flawed. This requires a leap of faith that even Kierkegaard would have found foolishly presumptuous.

At times, even the Frankfurt School itself has been victimized by its own radical ideology. Early in 1969 Frankfurt University was temporarily shut down when student demonstrators called a general strike and seized control of several buildings. When students moved in to occupy the facility of the Frankfurt School, the Institute's directors, Ludwig von Friedeburg and Theodor Adorno, responded like contemptible bourgeois administrators had done elsewhere in Europe and America: they called for the police to expel the barbarians. Then, a couple of months later, several female protesters burst into a classroom where Adorno was lecturing and staged a symbolic protest, baring their breasts and fulminating about sexist oppression. Adorno was neither amused nor impressed, but for a brief moment he was subjected to the kind of incivility, harassment and street theater (or in this case, stage theater) that Neo-Marxists have sponsored and encouraged for decades.

The legacy of the Frankfurt School is a mixed bag. While conservatives are unanimous in their condemnation of the Institute and Critical Theory for undermining traditional American values and institutions, liberals and leftists are more ambivalent. On the one hand, the Institute's brand of Marxist revisionism abandoned many of the revered dogmas of Marxist theory, including the revolutionary potential of the working class, class struggle as the dynamic engine of history, and the economic substructure as the basis of social analysis. Perhaps most significantly, the Institute, consisting primarily of leisured intellectuals and tenured academics, severed the connection between revolutionary theory and *praxis* (or action). Yet in the 1950s more than 50 scholars associated with the Institute gained positions in American colleges and universities, and their influence helped spark the student uprisings of the 1960s and the radicalization of American higher education. And in light of present political realities, it remains to be seen just how far-reaching their impact will be.

For Martin Jay, the primary contribution of the Frankfurt School was its preservation of the "integrity" of the Marxist ideal at a time when Stalinism threatened to delegitimize it. Most Christians and conservatives would consider that accomplishment alone to be the most damning indictment of the Frankfurt School.

## The Apostles of PC

### A Left-wing Rogues' Gallery

In conclusion, I have provided the following brief biographical sketches of six of the most significant and influential theorists in the history of American cultural Marxism: Eric Fromm, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, Paul Goodman and Noam Chomsky. The first three were Germans with direct connections to the Frankfurt School, while the last three were Americans whose works influenced the New Left and the counterculture in the 1960s and provided the philosophical basis for contemporary Political Correctness.

### Eric Fromm

Eric Fromm (1900-80) was a psychologist, psychoanalyst, and humanistic philosopher who was raised in an orthodox Jewish family. One of his grandfathers and two great grandfathers were rabbis, and an uncle was a Talmudic scholar. Nonetheless, Fromm rejected orthodox Judaism in his mid-twenties and became a committed secularist.

As a student at the University of Heidelberg, Fromm studied sociology under two renowned scholars, Karl Jaspers and Alfred Weber (a brother of Max Weber). He took his Ph.D. in sociology in 1922 and later trained in psychoanalysis.

In 1930 Fromm joined the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, and after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 he emigrated to America and taught at Columbia University. In 1943 he co-founded the Washington School of Psychiatry, and 3 years later he co-founded the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology. Fromm also taught at Bennington College (1941-50), Michigan State University (1957-61), NYU (1962-74), and at the University of Mexico in Mexico City.

Fromm's psychology was a mix of Marxism and Freudianism. While Marx emphasized economic determinism, Freud theorized that human behavior is mostly the product of biological drives and culture-based repression. To this, Fromm added a third component: the innate yearning for freedom – or as Abraham



Eric Fromm

Maslow would later term it, “self-actualization.”

In 1941 Fromm published *Escape from Freedom*, a seminal work in political psychology in which he theorized that due to the insecurities of life, we tend to gravitate toward authoritarian fascism unless we “master society and subordinate the economic machine to the purposes of human happiness.” *Escape from Freedom* was a favorite among left-wing ideologues and Existentialists alike, and it was often required reading at colleges and universities in the 1960s.

By the time Fromm published *Escape from Freedom*, he had parted company with his Frankfurt School colleagues over philosophical differences. Thereafter, he devoted himself exclusively to his clinical work and his subsequent writings. He followed *Escape from Freedom* with *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (1947) and *The Art of Loving* (1956), which are essentially Existentialist in nature. No longer a doctrinaire Marxist, he had come to believe that individual self-fulfillment is the greatest good. He defined a “true revolutionary” as an individualist who has “emancipated himself” from loyalty to his familial heritage, his nation-state, his race, his party and his religion.

From Fromm’s perspective, classical Marxist theory was psychologically naive, and he believed psychoanalysis could provide the missing link between a society’s socio/economic substructure and its ideological superstructure. Nonetheless, he always maintained that the greatest influence on his thinking was Marx, not Freud, whom he regarded as too bourgeois and patriarchal. When Fromm wrote his autobiography in 1962 he declared emphatically that “Marx is a figure of world historical significance with whom Freud cannot even be compared.” He also confirmed that “I have always upheld the... point that man’s capacity for freedom, for love, etc. depends almost entirely on [his] socio-economic conditions.”

In *The Sane Society* (1955) Fromm called for a “humanistic communitarian socialism.” He spurned Western capitalism and Soviet communism, both of which he considered to be bureaucratic, dehumanizing, and alienating, and argued that the “sane society” would be one in which human freedom and the communal good were the ultimate goals.

After severing his connections to the Institute of Social Research, Fromm’s subsequent work focused less on political and psycho-sexual issues and more on the interpersonal components of

neurosis. He also emphasized the integration of ethics and psychology, and in later years even developed a fascination with Zen Buddhism.

Although no longer a Neo-Marxist theoretician, Fromm didn’t totally divorce himself from politics. In the mid-1950s he joined the American Socialist Party, and he was a staunch supporter of SANE, the disarmament group aligned with the international peace movement. In 1968 he supported Eugene McCarthy for president, but gradually lost interest in politics after the 1968 election.

### Theodor Adorno

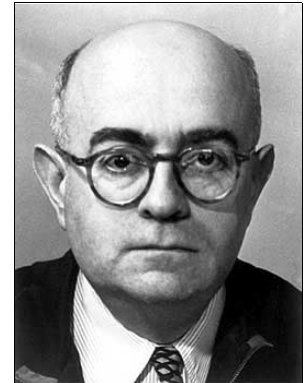
Theodor Adorno (1903-69) was one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s premier Neo-Marxist social philosophers. He grew up in a cultured family in which his mother, a Catholic, was a gifted musician, and his father, a Protestant convert from Judaism, was a wealthy wine merchant.

Adorno studied both music composition and philosophy at the University of Frankfurt, writing his dissertation on Kierkegaardian aesthetics under the direction of the Christian socialist and liberal theologian Paul Tillich.

In 1933 the Nazi government expelled him from the university due to his non-Aryan ancestry and Marxist ideology. The following year he sought refuge in England and then came to America in 1937, where he worked closely with Max Horkheimer at the Institute of Social Research at Columbia University and as the head of the music study division of the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University.

In 1941 Adorno became co-director of the Research Project on Social Discrimination at the University of California at Berkeley, and after the war he returned to Germany and taught at the University of Frankfurt from 1949-69.

Adorno was a doctrinaire Neo-Marxist who attributed the Holocaust to the influence of Enlightenment rationalism, which he considered to be the philosophical basis for modern totalitarianism. Yet conversely, he was also a gifted composer and a romantic at heart who considered the arts to be the key to human



Theodor Adorno



liberation. But ultimately, ideology prevailed over aesthetics, and he explained his disenchantment with the arts with the comment, "To still write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric."

As mentioned earlier, Adorno's book, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), was a seminal and influential work in Neo-Marxist psycho-politics. His "F-Scale" and strategy of associating conventional middle-class values with fascism and mental illness was as brilliant as it was dishonest. In many respects it defined the rules of engagement in the culture war, and succeeded in putting conservatives (and most Christians) clearly on the defensive.

Anticipating the rise of postmodernism, Adorno put forth the theory that language and dominant thought-forms are tools of political power that the ruling class uses to control social orthodoxy. As part of its control strategy, the ruling class uses commercial popular culture to pacify the masses, reinforce the dominant values, and control "deviants" – i.e., social and political dissidents. According to Adorno, all of this is driven by the insatiable demands of a capitalist economy that exploits people's greed for more material goods. That aside, his was not the radical postmodernism of later theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida. Throughout his career he remained a utopian idealist who envisioned a political system and a culture in keeping with his concept of social justice.

As a musicologist, Adorno understood the cultural and propaganda value of the arts – particularly, music and movies. As mentioned earlier, he was a scathing critic of commercial popular culture which regards art as little more than a marketable commodity, and he questioned whether true art could survive in a capitalistic world in which everything is driven by the profit motive. Seeing art as a primary front in the culture war, he believed that the only legitimate art and music were those that challenged the commercially-defined sensibilities of the middle class.

## Herbert Marcuse

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) was a philosopher, social theorist, and political activist. In terms of promoting cultural Marxism, Marcuse was the key figure as he linked the Neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School with the New Left movement of the 1960s. His influence was such that the media dubbed him "the father of the New Left."



Herbert Marcuse

Marcuse, like most of the early Frankfurt School scholars, was born into an affluent family of assimilated Jews. After serving in the German army in World War I he was briefly involved in politics with the Social Democratic Party, but he quit in protest when the party renounced revolutionary politics and began cooperating with the moderate

Weimar government. Marcuse studied philosophy at the universities of Berlin and Freiburg, and received a Ph.D. in literature in 1923. He later studied under Martin Heidegger, and although the two differed politically, Marcuse always acknowledged Heidegger as the greatest thinker and teacher he ever encountered. In 1933 he joined the faculty of the Frankfurt School's Institute of Social Research, and the following year he fled Nazi Germany and worked along with Horkheimer and others at the Institute of Social Research at Columbia University.

During the Second World War Marcuse worked for the Office of Secret Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, and he later served in the State Department as the head of the Central European Office for Intelligence Research in the immediate post-war period. In 1950 he returned to academia as a lecturer in sociology at Columbia University and a senior fellow at the Russian Institute, and four years later he joined the faculty of Brandeis University. Brandeis was a hotbed of left-wing politics, and Marcuse became a popular and influential professor. But he was also a lightning rod for controversy, and when Brandeis refused to renew his contract in 1962 he accepted a position at the University of California at La Jolla.

In 1955 Marcuse published his first major academic work, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. The book was a bold attempt to synthesize Marxism and Freudianism, and it became the essential connection between the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School and the New Left of the 1960s. *Eros and Civilization* was a wholesale repudiation of Western civilization and a clarion call for a cultural revolution, and it provided a pseudo-intellectual basis for the sexual revolution of the 1960s. The book quickly became a favorite among free-thinkers, Beatniks and bohemian hedonists, and a few years later it inspired a generation of young counterculture radicals in the Sixties.

*Eros and Civilization* is anything but a practical guide for revolution, but it set forth a libertarian and hedonistic social philosophy that held great appeal to affluent Baby Boomers in post-war America. Marcuse called for a democratic socialist society based on the principles of “non-alienating labor,” freedom, and the pursuit of happiness – including sexual liberation. As such, he rejected a central tenet of Freud’s theory of social psychology. According to Freud, civilized society operates according to the “performance principle,” and therefore it must necessarily be repressive by forcing its people to spend most of their time and energy working rather than gratifying their desires. Freud believed that if human beings were freed from the constraints of labor and traditional social and moral taboos, civilization itself would collapse.

In contrast, Marcuse called for the actualization of a “reality beyond the performance principle,” and asserted that mankind could find fulfillment “not through dominion and exploitation [i.e., the tyranny of labor and the “performance principle”] but through the release of inherent libidinal forces.” His socialist utopia would operate according to “the erotic reconciliation (or union) of man and nature in the aesthetic attitude, where order is beauty and work is play.”

[NOTE: I’m reminded of a dialogue that took place within a radical group in the late 1960s. The leader had just proclaimed that henceforth the group would abolish all social conventions, including work. From now on, all they would do is eat, sleep, have sex, and protest the war. That sounded perfectly groovy until one of the neophyte radicals thought to ask, “But who’ll make the signs?”]

Marcuse called for sexual liberation, “polymorphous perversity” and the abolition of the monogamous and “patriarchal” family, and at times he seemed perfectly enraptured by his own psycho-sexual fantasies:

No longer used as a full-time instrument of labor, the body would be resexualized, (which) would first manifest itself in a reactivation of all erotogenic zones and, consequently, in a resurgence of pre-genital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy. The body in its entirety would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed – an instrument of pleasure. This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been reorganized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family.

A “resexualized” body in which “all erotogenic zones” would be “reactivated” along with a “resurgence of pre-genital polymorphous sexuality” and “a decline of genital supremacy,” culminating in the “disintegration” of all cultural institutions? Marcuse apparently enjoyed himself immensely, but it’s hard to take all of this seriously. Perhaps that is why many Sixties’ radicals preferred reading *Eros and Civilization* while stoned. Yet the strangest part was that he dedicated the book to Sophie Marcuse, his wife of 50 years.

Predictably, *Eros and Civilization* elicited strong reactions even among those on the left side of the culture war. Eric Fromm called the book “nihilistic,” accused Marcuse of misrepresenting Freud, and pointed out that his former colleague lacked any practical experience with psychoanalysis. More seriously, he charged that the book promoted irresponsible hedonism. Like Freud, Fromm was convinced that the tension between hedonism and civilization was necessary to curb the worst excesses of human behavior. It was absurd, he argued, to think that widespread “polymorphous perversity” was compatible with a well-ordered society and culture. Certain practices that Marcuse tolerated, such as sadism and coprophilia, should never be socially sanctioned. Furthermore, the loss of restraint and the obsession with immediate gratification that Marcuse advocated would break down all self-discipline and render humanity easily manipulated, as in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

Yet despite its radical and irresponsible hedonism, *Eros and Civilization* was one of the landmark books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of igniting the sexual/cultural revolution of the 1960s. As William Lind observes...

Marcuse understood what most of the rest of his Frankfurt School colleagues did not; that the way to destroy Western civilization... was not through abstruse theory, but through sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Marcuse wrote other works for the new generation that spawned the New Left... but *Eros and Civilization* was the key work, the one that put the match to the tinder.  
[William S. Lind, "Further Readings in the Frankfurt School," in *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*.  
Www.freecongress.org.]

In 1958 Marcuse published *Soviet Marxism*, one of the first substantive critiques of Soviet Communism by a left-wing intellectual. Using a line of argument that would later become standard fare in Neo-Marxist circles, Marcuse charged that Stalin's regime had perverted orthodox Marxism and betrayed Lenin's revolution by the imposition of a totalitarian and bureaucratic state. Like many Neo-Marxist Western intellectuals, Marcuse departed from rigid Marxist orthodoxy whenever it suited his purposes, so he rejected the glorification of the state that relegated the individual to insignificance.

In his next major work, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse criticized both capitalism and Soviet-style communism. In place of classical Marxism, he advocated a form of "libertarian socialism" that glorified individualism and humanistic values. Nonetheless, the final aim was a radical cultural revolution that would transform man's basic existence. According to Marcuse, man actualizes his potential in history through revolution.

In his critique of capitalism, Marcuse argued that, whereas early capitalist societies had used human beings as units of production, advanced capitalist societies thrive on over-production and over-consumption. He contended that modern capitalism is an unholy alliance and a tangled web of exploitation involving capital investments, industrial management, technology, mass production, advertising, and mass consumption. In such a mutually-exploitative matrix, human beings become mindless consumers of unnecessary products – consumption addicts and pawns of modern advertising. As a result, the

working classes – those who ought to have a revolutionary consciousness – are co-opted by the seduction of mass consumption.

Marcuse argued that the end result is that human freedom is sacrificed as people live to work more so they can buy and consume more. He considered production and consumption to be an integral part of a "conformist society" that suppresses individualism, but his primary concern seemed to be that such mundane matters interfered with more important things in life such as the perfection of "polymorphous perversity."

According to Marcuse, the solution to escaping the robotic routine of modern society comes through "the Great Refusal" – an intentional rejection of capitalism, technology, and the cult of consumption. Rather than being a mindless slave addicted to production and consumption, Marcuse called for liberation... through erotic sexuality. As a leading advocate of sexual politics, he contended that sexual liberation was an essential aspect in the social and political transition from capitalism to socialism.

However, since the traditional proletariat class is innately conservative and religious, and because it has been co-opted by consumerism, the vanguard for any cultural revolution must come from disenfranchised minorities, social rebels, the liberal elite, and a radicalized intelligentsia.

Unlike most academicians who spurned popular culture, Marcuse recognized its potential impact on society and understood that a political revolution is inextricably linked to a cultural revolution. His theories influenced subsequent generations of scholars who specialized in popular culture as well as radical activists such as Abbie Hoffman, co-founder of the Youth International Party (YIPPIEs), and Angela Davis, a black Communist whom Marcuse called "my best student." [NOTE: Davis also studied in Frankfurt under Theodor Adorno.]

Marcuse's 1965 essay on "Repressive Tolerance" essentially defined what is now considered Political Correctness. He declared that capitalist democracies are innately totalitarian, and therefore a selective or "discriminatory form" of tolerance should be applied to ensure that the opinions of marginalized minorities are recognized. It is perfectly proper, he contended, to silence "repressive" intolerance (i.e., conservative opinions) in order to protect the rights of minorities. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression should be regulated in order to



suppress intolerant conservative views and behavior, and to promote a more fair and equitable society. In Marcuse's words, "Liberating tolerance would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left." In the essay he criticized mainstream liberals for failing to confront conservative values and other "evils," a theme that New Left singer/songwriter Phil Ochs incorporated into his scathing satire of liberal hypocrisy in "Love Me, I'm a Liberal."

In 1969 Marcuse wrote *An Essay on Liberation* in which he called for a systematic approach to cultural subversion, including a linguistic revolution to alter (and confuse) the meaning of key words and terms. Sensing that the times were indeed a-changin', he celebrated all the liberation movements of the Sixties from Civil Rights to the counterculture, student rebellions, women's liberation, gay liberation, and even the Vietcong. Skillfully exploiting racial politics, he demonized white males as the source of America's problems, and called on blacks to rise up and become the vanguard in a comprehensive social and political revolution. Emphasizing the theme that Charles Reich would incorporate into *The Greening of America*, Marcuse called for a radically new approach to the concept of revolution:

One can rightfully speak of a cultural revolution, since the protest is directed toward the whole cultural establishment, including the morality of existing society.... There is one thing we can say with complete assurance: the traditional idea of revolution and the traditional strategy of revolution has ended. These ideas are old-fashioned. [Quoted by Raymond V. Raehn in "The Historical Roots of 'Political Correctness,'" in William S. Lind, *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. [www.freecongress.org](http://www.freecongress.org).]

Unlike Adorno, Marcuse didn't buy into the emerging postmodern consciousness in the 1970s. As a hard-headed rationalist, he put forth a revised version of the classical Marxist metanarrative and promoted a kind of cultural Marxism that was more comprehensive than merely the economic component.

### C. Wright Mills

C. Wright Mills (1916-62) was an American sociologist who taught at Columbia University from 1946 until his death in 1962. Like Marcuse and Paul Goodman (see below), Mills was more of a libertarian socialist than a doctrinaire Marxist, but his contributions to New Left thought and Political Correctness were nonetheless considerable.



C. Wright Mills

Mills shared the same jaundiced view of traditionalists and conservatives as Adorno and Marcuse, but he aimed most of his criticism at the American liberal elite. In the process he articulated many of the themes that later characterized the ideology of the New Left –

specifically, that an undemocratic "power elite" dominated American society, and that mainstream liberalism had lost its social consciousness and now represented the status quo. As an ardent opponent of post-war U.S. foreign policy and the Cold War, he charged that a small group of Washington politicians, Pentagon officials and corporate barons controlled the government. (Interestingly, President Eisenhower would later warn of the dangers of an unchecked "military/industrial complex that was unresponsive to the interests of the American people.) To show his disdain for the governing elite, Mills traveled to Cuba in the early 1960s and wrote a book praising Fidel Castro's "social experiments."

Mills began his critique of American society in 1948 with *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. Like most leftist intellectuals who bought into Marxist conflict theory, Mills was troubled by the fact that American labor leaders had lost their radical edge and were willing to compromise with the capitalist business establishment for the sake of better pay, employment benefits and job security. To Mills, this was tantamount to selling out, and he considered it a tragic betrayal of the union ideal. In his mind, they had become part of the Establishment, and were therefore part of the problem in terms of moving American society

farther toward socialism. In a follow-up book, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), he applied the same analysis and critique to mainstream white collar employees and the corporate managerial class.

*The Power Elite* (1956) was Mills' most influential work, and it established his reputation as a major social critic. Although based on some dubious premises, it resonated with many Americans in a time when Cold War tensions were steadily escalating. It also provided fodder for disaffected leftists who believed American society was innately fascistic and oppressive.

Mills refused to call himself a Marxist, and if pressed, he probably would have preferred to describe himself as an independent libertarian socialist. Nonetheless, his view of American society and culture was certainly compatible with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and his basic philosophy incorporated traditional Marxist dialectical themes regarding social and political power relationships, alienation and manipulation. Like Politically Correct leftists today, his orientation was to politicize everything in life, as he wrote in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959): "It is the political task of the social scientist – as of any liberal educator – continually to translate personal troubles into public issues...."

### Paul Goodman

Like Marcuse and Mills, Paul Goodman (1911-72) provided intellectual inspiration for the New Left, primarily in his enormously popular and influential book, *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (1960). Goodman was a sociologist and a co-founder of Gestalt Therapy, but he is remembered primarily as an influential New Left theoretician and activist.



Paul Goodman

Goodman attended Hebrew schools as a youth, graduated from the City College of New York (CCNY) in 1932, and then pursued a doctorate degree in sociology at the University of Chicago. He was a regular contributor for several years to Dwight Macdonald's left-wing journal, *Politics*, although he freely admitted that he was

more of an anarchist than a socialist.

Goodman was a romantic and an idealist at heart. In an interview of Studs Terkel, he explained that his greatest challenge in life was "to grow up as a human being into a culture without losing nature." As a bisexual, he was involved in the gay liberation movement of the late Sixties and early Seventies – his "out of the closet" announcement coming in an essay entitled, "Being Queer." He argued that homosexual relationships between males were natural and healthy, and commented that "what is really obscene is the way our society makes us feel shameful and like criminals for doing human things that we really need."

As an anarchist, Goodman argued that even liberal institutions were repressive forces in American society. As an example, he contended that schools stifle children's healthy natural instincts and subtly indoctrinate them with the values of a materialistic and unhealthy society. He charged that order, conventionality and predictability took precedence over spontaneity and creativity, memorization of trivial facts trumped critical thinking, and the interests of teachers and administrators took priority over the needs of students. Similarly, he argued, all of American society was governed by the same perverse values. Large bureaucratic institutions – both governmental and private – were run by technocratic "experts" whose agendas ran counter to the needs and interests of their employees and the public in general. Centralized institutions were inefficient, wasteful and predatory, and constantly expanded their power at the expense of individual liberty and the general welfare.

Goodman's solution to the problems of bureaucratization and centralization resonated not only with the New Left but the Sixties counter-culture as well. In opposition to the conventional Establishment and the status quo, he proposed intentional decentralization and a return to small communities – a theme that Joni Mitchell later expressed in her popular song, "Woodstock."

We are stardust, we are golden  
We are caught in the Devil's bargain  
And we got to get ourselves  
Back to the Garden.

[Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock." Copyright 1969, Siquomb Music.]

Goodman had little hope that the older generations would rebel against the established order, but he was optimistic that young people could change the culture through radical reforms or by starting their own counter-cultural institutions. Throughout most of the Sixties he supported the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the New Left agenda in general, but eventually he disengaged from the movement as it became increasingly erratic, strident and violent. After a campus appearance in 1967 in which he was heckled by a group of radical students, he realized that an entirely new worldview was being forged – but it was anything but the dawning of the Age of Aquarius:

Suddenly I realized that [these students] did not believe there was a nature of things. [To them] there was no knowledge but only the sociology of knowledge. They had learned so well that physical and sociological research is subsidized and conducted for the benefit of the ruling class that they were doubtful that there was such a thing as simple truth.... I had imagined that the worldwide student protest had to do with changing political and moral institutions, and I was sympathetic to this. But I now saw that we had to do with a religious crisis. Not only all institutions but all learning had been corrupted by the Whore of Babylon, and there was no longer any salvation to be got from Works.

What Goodman was experiencing, of course, was the dawning of the age of postmodernism – a worldview devoid of morality that he and others such as Marcuse and Mills had inadvertently birthed through their systematic deconstruction of Western culture and values. Revolutions often end up devouring their own, and now it was Goodman who was being dispatched to the guillotine by the very radicals he had inspired just a few years earlier.

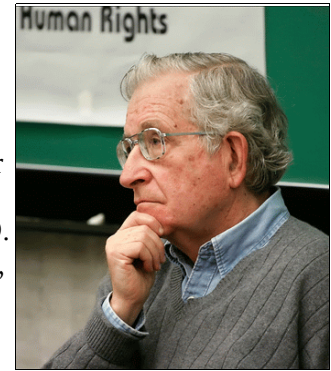
### Noam Chomsky

Noam Chomsky (1928- ) has been the foremost propagator of Frankfurt School-style Neo Marxism for the past 50 years. Chomsky is a philosopher and a political activist, and as a professor at M.I.T. he taught in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy from 1955 to the present. Chomsky was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his father was a Hebrew scholar as well as a member of the radical Marxist labor union, the I.W.W.

A self-described anarchist and “libertarian socialist” (a term he borrowed from Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man*), Chomsky has also been an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy since the 1960s. He condemned the American involvement in Vietnam and wrote that the U.S. should have been prosecuted for war crimes. Other than the United States, his favorite target has been Israel. Although an ethnic Jew, he has been a harsh critic of Israel and an ardent supporter of radical Palestinian groups such as the PLO. Following Nine-Eleven, he wrote that “the U.S. itself is a leading terrorist state.” In his book, *The End of Faith*, the atheist apologist Sam Harris chides Chomsky for drawing absurd “moral equivalencies” between the U.S. and Iraq, or between Osama ben Laden and Saddam Hussein and George Bush and Tony Blair.

Paradoxically, in recent years Chomsky has conceded that the United States is “the greatest” and “the freest country in the world.” In a 2002 interview on CNN with Paul Zahn, Chomsky declared...

I don’t just mean in terms of limits on state coercion, though that’s true, too, but also in terms of individual relations. The United States comes closest to classlessness in terms of interpersonal relations than virtually any society. [“Interview with Noam Chomsky and Bill Bennett,” *American Morning with Paula Zahn*. CNN (May 30, 2002). Tim Adams, “Noam Chomsky: Thorn in America’s Side.” *The Observer* (10/30/2003).]



Noam Chomsky



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